

# TEARS OF A HERO



## *The Amazing Story of Rubin & Ida Segal*



With the purpose of documenting and honoring  
their story, our story,  
and passing it down as a valuable legacy to  
our children and our children's children

*Leon Segal*

*January 2003*

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**Second Edition March 2021**



**TEARS OF A HERO: THE AMAZING STORY OF RUBIN & IDA SEGAL**

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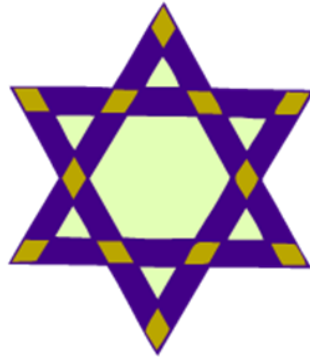
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**Dedicated**  
With Love and Devotion  
To Our Parents  
**Rubin and Ida Segal**



• *Victims, Fighters*

• *Rescuers, Survivors*

• *Parents, Heroes*











# TEARS OF A HERO



## *The Amazing Story of Rubin and Ida Segal*

Victims, Fighters



Rescuers, Survivors



Parents, Heroes

*Dedicated With Love and Devotion to Our Parents,  
Rubin and Ida Segal*

### Introduction:

*In 1998, a researcher documenting the history of Holocaust survivors for the Spielberg Shoah Foundation was interviewing Rubin and Ida Segal. Like too many others, they were making a videotape for posterity and for their family, telling stories that were so inconceivable and shocking that only testimony by the witnesses and the victims, would assure that people would continue to believe these stories in the future.*

*Rubin told the interviewer about some of his many wartime experiences, about the carnage he lived through, about his family and relatives who were brutally murdered. Responding to questions, Rubin recounted his life in the partisans, and described how he had personally killed Nazis in revenge and in self-defense.*

*The interviewer then asked Rubin “How did it feel, to kill so many people? How do you now feel?” Rubin stopped speaking, perhaps because this was the first time in sixty years that he had been asked this question. Tears filled his eyes; he started to sob, then to cry. The accented words came slowly and softly through the tears and sobs and tortured memories:*

*“I....didn’t....want....to....kill....anybody.*

*I....never....wanted....to....kill....anybody.*

*They....made....me....do....it. I...was...forced...to...do...it.*

*So..we..could..live,.....to....survive.”*

*Ida started to weep, and she said to the interviewer.*

*“He was a true hero.....Did you ever see a hero cry?”*



*This is Their Story.* *This is Our Story.*

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## *The Toll*

Our family, Rubin and Ida, lost nearly 100 close relatives to the Nazis. These innocent victims were murdered in the streets, ghettos, labor camps, and barbaric mass killings.

These people included sisters, aunts, uncles, first cousins, contemporaries of Ida and Rubin, young people and children; people who would likely be alive today.

If these relatives had lived, and if each contemporary of Ida and Rubin had married and had only two children per family:

- Leon, Rosaline, Aaron, and David, would have had over 100 additional second cousins.
- Grandchildren Jennifer, Steven, Jason, Eric, Yale, Jonathan, Neal, Danny, and Darren would have had over 200 additional relatives in their generation.
- Great grandchildren Harrison, Susan, Jillian, Sammy, Matthew, Deborah and Emma would have had over 400 additional relatives in their generation.

Our family lost literally hundreds of people.  
Generations were lost.



*This is Our Story.*



*This is Our Descendants' Story.*





## **TEARS OF A HERO**

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## **EPILOGUE – March 13, 2021**

### **Update to The Amazing Story of Rubin and Ida Segal, 2003**

– [K.] denotes Kozlowski, Kazlow, etc. Sections include photos and commentary

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☆      **TEARS OF A HERO**      ☆  
*The Miraculous Story of Rubin and Ida Segal*

**THE SETTING: Eastern Europe**

*Chaya Kozlowski and Reuven Segalowicz grew up in the picturesque and serene countryside of Eastern Europe where numerous nations, cultures, religions, and politics had come together for centuries.*

This is the factual, often painful account of the lives of Chaya Kozlowski and Reuven Segalowicz. Reading about their lives may be upsetting, but it does not even remotely compare to what they endured. To understand their plight, the reader should visualize being in their place, if that is possible. By the age of 19, strong-willed and innocent Reuven was already working for several years to support his widowed mother and sisters. Chaya was a shy and modest girl living in a tiny, desolate village, who had dreams of becoming a doctor and living in a free Zionist state. Their lives and dreams were completely disrupted by the horrors of a genocidal war thrust upon them. Their existence became a nightmare in which they were hunted like animals, and believed that each day would be their last. This is the story of two young people who survived the worst genocide ever known to man by fearlessly fighting back. While they miraculously survived, they lost nearly 100 close relatives: a mother, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, and cousins.

Chaya and Reuven were born and grew up in the Republic of Byelorussia, in a picturesque country setting of forests, rivers, and fields of grain. The large forests were so dense in some places that daylight never penetrated to the forest floor. Noblemen had used these forests as exclusive game reserves for centuries, hunting for deer, wolves, foxes, and boar. Carefree children went to the forests to gather berries and mushrooms. This region was not always serene, however, as numerous nationalities, cultures, religions, and politics often clashed forcefully. Periods of tranquility alternated with recurring eruptions of conflict, war, and barbarity. Byelorussia is wedged between the large, often-dominating countries of Russia and Poland. To the south is the Ukraine, to the west is Lithuania, and as Reuven and Chaya grew up, the bellicose Third Reich was coming to power in Germany, just west of Poland. For centuries, the environs of the sizable Polish Kingdom were a welcoming haven for Jews in a world of persecution. By the 1920s, however, this area was starting to change from a sanctuary to an evil trap.

No one knows exactly how the Kozlowski and Segalowicz families came to this part of the world, but their ancestors doubtlessly followed one of the numerous nomadic paths of other Jews of the Diaspora. Our earliest ancestors almost certainly made their way from our ancient homeland of *Eretz Yisroel* (the Land of Israel) to this region of Europe by an indirect odyssey through many lands. In all likelihood, our ancestors eventually entered this region either from Central Europe through Germany or possibly from the southern regions of Russia or the Crimean Peninsula. We can infer the possible travel paths of our ancestors by looking at Jewish history through the ages, a history marked by both voluntary migration and forced expulsions. The “wandering Jew,” roaming endlessly, is only a partial myth, which was only brought to rest with the creation of Israel.



## **From *Eretz Yisroel*, עֵרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, to Eastern Europe**

*Jews left their ancient homeland both voluntarily and forcibly. Centuries later, as Jews were expelled from Europe and Russia, Polish nobility invited Jewish emigration in order to help build their country.*

The Twelve Tribes of Israel had lived in the lands of present-day עֵרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Eretz Yisroel*, for thousands of years before forming the first consolidated kingdom under King Solomon, approximately 1,000 years before the birth of Christ. By that time, a small number of Jews already lived outside the Hebrew kingdom, a result of trade, travel, and warfare within this strategic world crossroad region. The Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BC and scattered most of its Jews, who became the “Ten Lost Tribes of Israel”. After the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple in 597 BC, a large part of the remaining Judean population was sent into exile in Babylon, in the area of present-day Iraq, barely 500 miles east of Jerusalem.

Not long thereafter, by 539 BC, the Persian Empire came to power in the region and welcomed the Israelites to return to the Persian province of ‘Yehud’. A portion of the Jewish population did return, but many did not, as life in the Persian Empire was very hospitable in most respects. From this time on, the Jewish people outside of Israel have outnumbered those in Israel. But even those that did not return kept their religion, identity, Hebrew language, social customs, loyal connection to their homeland of Zion, and devotion to our core document—the Torah.

The first major dispersion (Diaspora) of Jews from the ancient homeland region came under the ensuing Hellenistic Greek rule, where very large numbers of Jews were displaced thousands of miles from Israel. This was not actually the result of forced exile, but largely an outcome of new opportunities provided under the benevolent rule of Alexander the Great. During this period, many Jewish settlements were formed in areas of the vast Greek Empire surrounding the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. This area stretched across North Africa and from Italy through Turkey to the shores of the Black Sea, the origin of the first Jews in Russian territory. Alexander the Great greatly respected his Jewish subjects. The new Egyptian City of Alexandria became the largest Jewish community in the world, in which only Jews and Greeks were allowed to live. Greek reign turned hostile under later rulers, and by 161 BC, Israel regained its independence through the successful Maccabee revolt, after which the Jewish State came into being once again.

Playing a huge game of global musical chairs, by the year 70 AD the Jewish State fell under the most powerful empire the world had ever seen—Imperial Rome. Rome’s legions conquered the entire region and installed a Jewish king over Judea. However, this king owed his allegiance to Rome. The Judeans revolted against the tyrannical Roman rule, but the powerful Roman legions eventually destroyed the heroic resistors, including those at Masada. In retribution for the rebellion, the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, decisively drove the majority of Judea’s inhabitants to the outermost reaches of Rome’s huge empire, and declared that the land of Israel would no longer exist.



The Romans often renamed their conquered lands, and wanted to eliminate all connection between Jews and their beloved Judea and Jerusalem. To further insult the Jews, the Romans named the region for an ancient Jewish enemy that had been conquered by the Jews centuries earlier, the Philistines, and started to call this land Palestine (Palaestina in Latin). By this time, there were few if any Philistines left in this region, and the Romans never dealt with any 'Palestinian people'. The Biblical Philistines were a seafaring tribe that came to Judea from the Aegean Sea area of Greece and Turkey, settling along the coast in the region of Gaza. The Arab word Filastin is derived from the original Latin-Roman name. Palestine has never existed—before or since—as an autonomous entity. The Romans also renamed Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina, the Latin names for the ruling family and their pagan gods. This tongue-twisting name obviously had little staying power.

For the first time, Jews now found themselves forced to live well beyond the perimeter of the Mediterranean Sea, including further inland. Jewish settlements were founded in England, Spain, France, Greece, Turkey, North Africa, and in central and southern Germany, which is almost directly north of Rome. The majority of Jews, over 90%, were now thousands of miles from their homeland, and Jews became a minority in *Eretz Yisroel*. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, further Jewish migration resulted in substantial Jewish settlements in the Crimean peninsula on the Black Sea just south of the Ukraine, and in modern Yugoslavia.

The Roman Empire eventually disintegrated also, and as the Turkish-based Ottoman Empire displaced the remnants of the Eastern Roman Empire, Jews started to enjoy remarkable prosperity. The Ottoman Empire was as extensive as any empire before them, and penetrated from Spain on the West to Russia and China on the East. Islamic law tolerated the religious rights of minorities, although non-believing Jews and Christians were treated as inferior citizens. The Moslems had no 'Christ-killer' beliefs, and Jews were actually preferred to Christians, who often tried to convert the Moslems, and had killed thousands of Moslem 'infidels' during the Crusades. Still, Jews in Moslem lands bore special taxes, had living and occupational restrictions, could not bear arms or ride horses, and had to wear distinguishing clothing, sometimes yellow. However, under Islam, religious persecution, violent abuse, and forced conversions were mostly absent, and Jews were allowed to practice their customs and trades. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Jews had become important accountants, administrators, and doctors to the ruling Moslems, and Jewish communities grew along the Silk Road, the ancient trade route linking the Mediterranean to China.

During these times, Jews were relatively better off in the Islamic world than in Christian Europe, where anti-Semitism and demonization of Jews were becoming rampant. For Jews living in Europe, life vacillated between good times and bad. Jews were periodically welcomed for the benefits they brought, and then discriminated against for various economic, political, and religious reasons. Jews were known as being astute at managing money, a result of the imposed professional boundaries. Jews were educated, literate, and had trading contacts in other lands, a result of the Diaspora. From the 7<sup>th</sup> century until the Crusades of 1096, Jewish life was tolerable in Europe, as rulers invited Jews to become an



almost privileged part of their medieval governments. However, when economies began to decline, or when the Christian clergy prevailed, privileges were often revoked. In general, 'good times' for Jews was still a life filled with hidden or outright anti-Semitism, discrimination, persecution, and sporadic physical harm.

Sadly, Jews became accustomed to existence under harsh conditions, to pogroms, persecution, and periodic expulsions, and accepted this as their fate. Many Jews believed that the best way to deal with such a life was to either wait it out until conditions improved or hostile regimes changed, or just move to a hopefully better environment. Therefore, Jewish relocation ensued when tolerable conditions deteriorated, when life became too severe, or when governments or laws changed. During these centuries, a small and faithful stream of Jews had steadily been returning to their homeland of *Eretz Yisroel*, where they did not have to develop the same depressing mindset of tolerating continual persecution.

As Christianity ascended to power, the dark age of anti-Semitism began in Western Europe. The Catholic Church became more vocally and actively anti-Semitic, blaming Jews for rejecting Christ and for refusing conversion to Christianity, and publicly labeled Jews a despised people. The Church promoted numerous anti-Semitic measures that affected everyday life. Christians were discouraged from associating with Jews, who were forced into segregated areas—ghettos. Jews were driven from selected crafts so they would not compete with Christians, and therefore took up other occupations such as trading and money lending. The kick-off ceremonies of the Crusaders in 1096 included large-scale massacres of Jewish communities across Western Europe, and this resulted in waves of Jewish migration. Three years later the Crusaders climaxed their First Crusade in the same way they started it, by slaughtering 29,000 of Jerusalem's 30,000 Jews. During these Holy Wars, the Christian citizens on the home front did their part by persecuting Jews, including forced conversions, mass hangings, and burnings.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jews were presented with an ultimatum; conversion or expulsion. Jews of course chose expulsion, and were expelled *en masse* from almost all the major countries of Europe. Local rulers used these opportunities to rid themselves of financiers to whom they owed money, or of unwanted competition. Jews were expelled from England in 1290, from France in 1306, from Spain in 1492, from Germany between 1432 and 1520, from Holland in 1582, and from Russia's regions beginning in 1753. Sporadic expulsions actually continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These expulsions changed the character of world Jewry forever. Many Jews migrated to the Moslem lands, which for the most part accepted them openly. From Moslem-controlled Portugal, Italy, and Spain, where Sephardic Jewry originated, Jews migrated to Arabic North Africa.

Tellingly, no expulsions from the Polish Kingdom occurred during these times, and Jews in fact traveled into Poland, often as emissaries of their Moslem rulers. There is some evidence that the very first Jews to settle in Poland were in fact Sephardic, but either their numbers were insignificant or their stay was transient. Small numbers of Jews had also settled in various regions of Eastern Europe and Poland well before the 11<sup>th</sup> century, relocating here either by decree or by choice.



However, the mass expulsions resulted in much larger Jewish migrations than previously, and Jews converged to the accommodating provinces of Poland. At the same time, large inflows of Jews also started arriving from the Crimean and Ukrainian regions of Czarist Russia because of the unbearable conditions there. The earliest Jews in Lithuania spoke Russian, as these Jews “did not know the language of the *Ashkenaz*” (German). Several times after the 13<sup>th</sup> century the ruling nobility actually invited Jewish emigration from neighboring Germany into Poland and the Ukraine in order to colonize and rebuild the villages and towns devastated by the Mongol invasions. The authorities recognized the shortcomings of their native populace, as the majority of peasants, farmers and laborers were abysmally illiterate, ignorant and superstitious.

When the Black Plague and famines resulted in extremely intolerable conditions in Germany in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, large numbers of Jews again came to Poland. The Black Plague killed a third of Europe’s population, and Jews were accused of spreading the disease. The superstitious masses believed Jews poisoned wells in revenge for decades of persecution, and it did not help that the segregated Jewish ghettos with their strict dietary and sanitary codes suffered the least. Earlier Jewish settlements in Poland had built a thriving culture and base for expansion, despite periodic episodes of persecution. The Yiddish language was thus brought into Poland from Germany, where it had developed over 700 years.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century Kingdom of Poland was nearly 5 times as large as current Poland, and was the largest country in Europe. It stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and included parts of current Germany, Russia, the Baltic States, Lithuania, and Belarus. On a comparative basis, Jewry thrived under the ruling regimes in these regions. Until the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the people in the area that included Poland and its environs were pagans, and as such did not discriminate against Jews for religious reasons. (The last pagan country in Europe to become Christian was Lithuania in 1387. In a perverse reversal, Nazi Germany became a pseudo-paganistic country that was often anti-Christian in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.)

The eastward migration from Western Europe stopped at the borders of Russia, which did not welcome Jews. Inopportunistly, Russia’s conquest of Turkish territories in 1768 brought even more Jews into Russia’s Crimean and Black Sea regions. From here, Jews again moved into neighboring and willing Poland. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hasidim swept into Poland from the Ukraine, creating a Jewish religious revival that survived the Holocaust. In this way, the lands in and around Poland became the end-point for Jewish migration from other regions.

As the majority of Jews who settled in the Kingdom of Poland came from either the Germanic or Russian lands, it is likely that our ancestors also came from one of these regions. No doubt, there were many detours along the way between *Eretz Yisroel* and final settlement in Eastern Europe. Perhaps some of our ancestors spent some time in Babylon, or Alexandria, or Athens, or Rome, or on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Similarly, the journeys of Chaya Kozlowski and Reuven Segalowicz from Eastern Europe to America, while on their way to Israel, was far from direct, and again was the result of persecution and a search for a decent life.



## Jewish Life in Eastern Europe

*Eastern Europe was once a desirable destination for Jews, when discrimination and taxes here were considered highly preferable compared to forced conversion, pogroms, and death elsewhere.*

The Jewish community in Eastern Europe survived and often thrived by adapting to meet the changing political, economic, and religious climates. This was no easy task, as the region was continuously subjected to conflicting forces. For centuries, Poland was the core of world Jewry, a welcoming country as compared to the surrounding regions. During and immediately following the Middle Ages, Jews enjoyed relatively unprecedented liberties in the extensive Polish-dominated regions of Eastern Europe, while Jews in the rest of Europe were suffering through severe hardships and persecution. The Polish royal families recognized the special attributes and skills that the Jewish traders, merchants, and craftsman could contribute to the economic development of their poorly developed, agricultural, or war-ravaged regions. Christians at that time did not engage in retail or trade, leaving those lines of work to the Jews, who had historically moved into trading as they were restricted from other occupations. They became good at it, using their literacy, international contacts, and multi-lingual skills to good advantage. Because Jews owed no allegiance to any specific country except the one in which they resided, they also proved more trustworthy than other ethnic groups.

During those times, the region's rulers periodically gave Jews special privileges, desirable positions, and protection. This was both good and bad for the Jews. As Jews became managers and estate stewards, hostile reactions by the Catholic clergy and competing Christian businessmen increased. Peasants resented paying taxes or rents to Jewish collectors, and considered the Jews their direct exploiters. Whenever Jews became successful, commercial rivalry and jealousy often resulted in anti-Jewish measures. Even if the Jews were poor, the even-poorer locals envied them anyway, or imagined that they had hidden riches. The myth of hidden Jewish wealth had some logic because the Christians believed the persecuted Jews "always kept something for a black hour"—which eventually arrived.

By the 1600s, the Christian Church became dominant, and Jews had to struggle more than ever for even basic rights. The clergy always played a primary role in rescinding whatever benefits accrued to the Jews. The clerics stirred up the local peasants with their vile interpretations of Christianity, teaching that Jews were Christ-killers and ritual murderers. The church promoted restrictions on occupations, settlement areas, and religious practice. It encouraged forced conversion, pogroms, torture, expulsion, and killings, often by burning. Sometimes the pogroms and killings were actually scheduled events, and some were the results of fantastically ridiculous accusations. Jews were accused of causing natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes, and of 'planning to poison wells'. Jews were accused of ritual murder, using the blood of Gentile children to produce *matzo's*. [These absurd fantasies are still believed and disseminated even today. In April 2002, a Saudi Arabian Ph.D. college professor detailed in a Saudi newspaper fanciful Jewish recipes for *hamuntashen*—for Passover—using 'the blood of Christian and Islamic children'.]



Where Jews were allowed to live or specifically invited, or even given special legal status, life was tolerable. At the same time, 'tolerable' still meant living with discriminatory taxes, restrictions on occupations, education, travel, housing, religious practices, and even humiliating clothing requirements. Even in supposedly good times and in friendly areas, regimes changed because of wars, death, and politics, and Jews wound up living under new and unfriendly rule overnight. During wars, the Jews often suffered the most, as annihilation of entire Jewish communities seems to have been a wartime ritual perpetrated by both victors and vanquished.

For the most part, Jews in the Polish Kingdom progressed culturally during these periods, although economic advancement was variable. Jewish merchants and craftsmen prospered in the large cities, and became a significant part of the middle class. In the poor agricultural areas, economic conditions were difficult for all inhabitants regardless of religion. Poland was nevertheless an attractive destination, as shown by the 16<sup>th</sup> century saying: "it is preferable to live on dry bread and in peace in Poland—than to remain in better conditions in more dangerous lands". At this time, nearly 80% of world Jewry lived in Poland, which boasted over 6,000 synagogues. However, Poland was partitioned 3 times between 1772 and 1795, with Russia, Austria, and Germany claiming portions of the country each time. These countries were less hospitable to Jews than sovereign Poland had been.

By the very late 1800s, Poland passed legislation making Jews equal in the eyes of the law. Jewish institutions grew and thrived, and Jews became important advisors to Poland's rulers. Jews managed the mint, and Polish coins had Hebrew inscriptions. Jews no longer had to leave Poland to study medicine. Before this time, Jews who wanted to study medicine had the choice of converting to Christianity or leaving Poland to study elsewhere. However, this progress in no way equated with assimilation into the fundamentally unreceptive Polish culture, which considered Jews a separate race. This was partially due to the insular nature of the Polish Jewish community, which never lost its very strong sense of a distinct national identity. Polish Jews did not consider themselves 'assimilated', and considered Yiddish their native tongue. In contrast, Germany's Jews considered themselves highly assimilated, and intermarriage was widespread.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish population eventually made up about one third of the population of the large cities of central Poland, and up to 70% or more of the many smaller *shtetlach* (towns). In Warsaw, a city of nearly one million people, over 60% of the physicians were Jewish. There were over 130 Jewish periodicals and journals published in three languages—Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish. Jews fought for Poland in its battles for independence, in World War 1 and on both fronts at the beginning of World War 2. Now, one of Poland's claims to fame is that it housed the world's largest, most automated death factory—Auschwitz—where one-and-a-quarter million people from 10 countries were methodically killed. Imagine one-third of the city of Los Angeles disappearing. Auschwitz is now Poland's number-one tourist attraction. Another of Poland's claims to fame is that it is the only country in the world where Jews were killed in pogroms—**after the war ended.**



Superimposed onto the traditional treatment of Poland's Jews were the practices of the conquering countries during their periods of occupation. From the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Czarist Russia ruled the region where the Segalowicz and Kozlowski families lived. Russia historically exploited the people and resources of her conquered lands harshly. Although not nearly as pronounced as the anti-Jewish restrictions, the Russians often took away Roman Catholic houses of worship or converted them to Greek Orthodox churches. This was most pronounced when atheistic Communist Russia occupied this area. Religious icons were methodically removed, replaced by pictures of Lenin and Stalin.

Jews always suffered in Russia's conflicts with its neighbors, whether Russia won or lost, through pogroms, massacres, 'war tax' extortion, and forced conscription. Induction into the Russian Army was not just a brief stint, as the conscription period in the mid-1800s was 25 years. Seven and eight-year-old children were literally kidnapped by professional 'grabbers' to meet draft quotas. If they were below the age of 12, they faced 6 years of indoctrination in Christianity before military service, and were coerced to convert. When these converts eventually came home, they were often shunned by their families, or were unable to re-establish family ties. Some "catchers" were Jews from neighboring towns, who stole children to meet their own town's quotas. Nearly 40,000 Jewish children suffered this fate. Jewish inductees became cannon fodder, placed between armed enemies facing them from the front and anti-Semitic comrades ready to shoot them from the rear. Jewish draftees were used to clear minefields by being forced to march across them.

To escape Russia's cruel and often fatal draft, Jewish families rushed young sons into marriage, altered birth dates, or bribed officials. Young Jewish men pierced their eardrums or broke their noses to develop medical problems, or just left Russia altogether. Ida's grandfather Aaron Lipchin came to America to escape the Russo-Japanese war, and Ida's father had his nose broken before the First World War. It was also very common for Jews to change their surnames to non-Jewish ones.

The original Segalowicz surname was Levine or Levin, and the Kozlowski surname was originally Leibman. Actually, Jewish surnames in Greater Poland and Russia were not even common until 1844, when Jews were decreed to take official surnames for tax and census reasons. Before this, Jews in this region were mostly known by their name and their father's given name, such as 'Reuven ben Leib' (Rubin, son of Leib). Some Jewish surnames described the family occupation, or town or region (which could change if the family moved). Some 'fancy' surnames could be bought, such as GLUCK (luck), DIAMOND, KOENIG (king), or LIEBER (lover). Hebrew or Jewish-based surnames were also used. The Polish suffix '-ski' was originally a sign of nobility; so many peasants 'improved' their names to end this way. Kozlowski is one of the most common Polish surnames, and was a good way to safely blend into the Polish populace.

Polish self-rule was restored briefly, but Russia again ruled this region during the second partition of Poland, from 1793 until 1918. After World War 1, the Commonwealth of Poland regained its independence. All of a sudden, Poles became a privileged class again, rather than lower class citizens of Russia.



However, post-war conditions changed Poland from one of the most tolerant and enlightened countries in Europe into a virulently anti-Semitic country. A prime cause was the Catholic Church's increasingly hateful teachings to the receptive ears of the ignorant and backward Polish populace. After Church services, Poles would come out spewing anti-Semitic curses. One could only wonder what venom was preached at the sermon. The worldwide depression and deteriorating economic climate also hurt Jews, who became convenient scapegoats for all of Poland's ills. Jews were displaced from jobs, government positions, and all political parties except the Socialists. By 1939, one-third of Poland's Jews were partially dependent upon American relief agencies. Another factor was the rise of Communism, which threatened Polish independence. Although only a minority of Jews embraced Communism, anti-Semites were quick to paint all Jews as Communists. To the displeasure of nationalistic Poles, the nation-less Jews did not share their political and nationalistic aspirations.

By the 1940s, Poles saw one positive outcome of the horrible world war, no matter who won: "Polska bez Żydów"—Poland without Jews. It was not by chance that Germany chose Poland as the place for the extermination of Jews. Major factors included: (1) the proximity to Germany; (2) the high Jewish population; (3) the rise and pervasiveness of anti-Jewish sentiment; and (4) the support that anti-Jewish laws received from the Polish populace, largely supported by the Catholic clergy. However, to Poland's questionable 'credit' it is true that no anti-Semitic acts ever originated in Poland. Poland did not invent pogroms, ghettos, yellow badges, concentration camps, or mass killings. Poland just adopted and practiced well what others invented. The pogrom was a Russian invention, carried to extremes in the vicious Ukraine, and later imported by Poland. Jewish ghettos originated in Western Europe, and the yellow badge came from either the Arab countries or Western Europe. Concentration and death camps were of course brought into Poland by Germany, who also perfected mass killings, gassings, and cremation.

Jewish life in the countries bordering Poland varied considerably. The Republic of Belarus, the three Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and the Ukraine all shared a history of domination by other countries—including each other, that affected Jewish life. Lithuania at one time encompassed much of Belarus and the Ukraine. Besides Poland and Russia, nearby powers such as Germany, Austria, and even Denmark and Sweden, carved out pieces periodically. The borders between these countries shifted unpredictably because of these regional wars, and parts of Belarus became Polish, and vice-versa, often.

During the times that the major powers dominated the small countries in this region, they often colonized the countries by purposefully moving large portions of their populations into the occupied countries, including administrative and military personnel. There was also a natural emigration of people seeking better living conditions and new opportunities. This resulted in large contingents of ethnic Russians, Poles, Germans, and others living in the contiguous countries. As an outcome of Russia's domination of the Baltic States, these areas became part of the Russian 'Pale of (Jewish) Settlement', and the Republics of Lithuania and Latvia became a prime destination for the Jewish influx from restricted portions of Russia.



Towns in border regions consisted of highly mixed ethnic populations, who mostly lived in relative harmony. Citizens of these regions often knew several languages, which they learned through the changing educational systems, and from their ethnic neighbors. However, proximity did not mean acceptance or equality. Ethnic groups were not considered true citizens of these countries, despite any emancipation laws on paper. The 'foreign' ethnic groups in these countries were described by the names of their mother country. Thus, ethnic Poles living in Belarus or Lithuania were called Poles, even if they had lived in these regions for generations.

In early times, Jews were accepted and genuinely welcomed in these smaller republics, even if restrictions were imposed on many aspects of their lives. However, restrictions, discrimination, and extra taxes were tolerable compared to pogroms, forced conversion, or death. While there were major pogroms in Russia during its disastrous 1905 Russo-Japanese war, there was not a single pogrom in Latvia, where Catholic peasants prevented Russians from attacking 'their Jews'. Following World War 1, all three Baltic States became independent, and were neutral or relatively receptive to Jews. Latvian literature reflected friendliness towards the Jews "and their curious ways." Latvia's Jews were entitled to state-subsidized Hebrew or Yiddish education, and the Jewish youth movement 'Betar' was founded here in 1923. Early in the war, Latvia provided sanctuary for Jews. Unfortunately, this changed as the war brought out the worst in so many people.

Following the First World War, anti-Semitism in these regions all increased, varying by country and the prevailing economic and political conditions. Estonia had the smallest concentration of Jews, and anti-Semitism was less pronounced here than in central Poland or the Ukraine, which had high Jewish populations. In Lithuania and Latvia, anti-Semitism increased markedly after the 1939 Russian invasion. The Communists had sympathizers in all these countries, and Jews were conspicuously present in their ranks. Jews thus became identified with the enemy, although in many cases even apolitical Jews welcomed the Russians as protectors against Hitler. A minor exception to Polish anti-Semitism existed in the regions of Lithuania and Belarus that were close to the Ukraine. In this region, ethnic Ukrainians often outnumbered Poles. Ukrainians had a historic vitriolic prejudice against both Poles and Jews, and persecuted them endlessly and brutally. Poles in this region may have commiserated more with the Jews than those in central Poland.

As the War progressed, whatever earlier empathy may have existed toward the Jews vanished, and much of Eastern Europe became virulently anti-Semitic. Large numbers of Poles, Latvians, and Lithuanians became vicious Jew-killers, willingly helping the Nazis. Non-German "police squads" were formed under Nazi control. Lithuania had the highest collaboration rate of all the occupied countries. The Nazis encouraged persecution and killing of Jews and betrayal of partisans. They wanted the local population to be accomplices in their crimes in order to be linked with the German cause, as well as to free up their German troops for other duties. It is interesting to note that until Hitler came to power, modern Germany was not overtly anti-Semitic. Observers at that time noted that New York City had more discrimination and conspicuous anti-Semitism than Germany. German Jews were highly assimilated, and proud of this "accomplishment". Within five years, though, Germany became irrationally anti-Semitic, and spread its venom.



The situation was traditionally even worse in the neighboring Ukraine, with its historic brutal anti-Semitism. Over 100,000 Ukrainian Jews were slaughtered in pogroms in both the 1648-1649 and 1919-1920 periods. In the earlier slaughter, the Ukrainians killed their victims by the most barbaric methods imaginable: roasting on coals, splitting asunder with swords, boiling in water, cutting feet off, and splitting women open and sewing cats into their abdomens. During the later pogroms, nationalistic Ukrainians directed their hatred at Jews who settled from Russia and brought the Russian language with them. Ukrainians acclaimed the perpetrators of these killings as national heroes, and anti-Semitic folk songs, literature, and political rhetoric were features of everyday life. Ukrainian priests encouraged the savage treatment of Jews with their unique interpretations of the Bible.

Belarus was historically tied closely to Poland through much of its early history, and was kept as a poorly developed agricultural colony. Under Czarist rule during the partitions of Poland, the Belarusian language and Catholic religion were banned, and the Russian language, religion, heavy taxes, and the mandatory 25 years of military service were imposed. This made the former Polish rule seem desirable in comparison. Under Soviet Communist rule, large numbers of Belarusian 'troublemakers' were deported to Siberia, and the poor country was made even poorer by Communist collectivization schemes that never worked. Under the next round of Polish rule, Belarus was further impoverished by added colonial exploitation, and more heavily populated by ethnic Poles. During the war, the nationalistic Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians changed their allegiances towards whatever side they thought might advance their goals of national independence. While Germany was winning the war, these nationalists sided with the Nazis, who promised them 'independence'. When Germany was on the run, these republics sided with Russia.

In these countries, many of the Nazi collaborators, police, partisans, and other volunteers who participated in the murder of Jews had numerous rationalizations and excuses for their acts. Many current historical narratives insist that the local citizens were forced to commit atrocities by the Nazis under threat of death, which may have been true in some cases. Others admitted their crimes but justified their acts by saying that they were taking revenge on (all!) Jews for supposed collaboration with the Soviet occupiers, or for Communist sympathies. Others claimed that they gave in to aggressive Nazi propaganda. Others said the clergy encouraged the killings. No one admitted to basic human frailties: vicious anti-Semitism, greed for the most paltry material goods, or plain-old depravity and barbarity. Few of these excuses are rational reasons for killing a neighbor or friend, or even a stranger. However, as in other regions and countries, some decent and kind Polish, Latvian, Byelorussian, and Lithuanian individuals, families, and clergy protected, aided, and saved Jewish lives. A few virtuous Gentiles aided Rubin, Ida and their families many times, and undoubtedly saved their lives several times.



## The *Shtetl*

*Jewish culture, traditions, values, and unity were preserved in the picturesque and unspoiled shtetl environment, which was the unique foundation of unbroken Jewish life in this region for hundreds of years.*

The *shtetl* came into being in the territories of the Polish Commonwealth, the once vital Kingdom of Poland. In this large area, a multitude of ethnic groups with disparate nationalistic aspirations and distinct cultures came together, leading to often-tumultuous times. Poland was clearly the nucleus of world Jewry, both in population and in culture. By 1900, over 7 million Jews were concentrated in this region, including over 3 million in Poland and 2 million in Western Russia. Germany, for all its future anti-Jewish histrionics, had only a half-million Jews. While many Jews lived in the large Polish cities, a substantial number lived in smaller communities where Jews sometimes made up to 80% of the population—the *shtetl*, a legacy of the social structure of ancient, feudal Poland.

*Shtetl* is the diminutive of the Yiddish word *shtot*, meaning state or town. It appears that a *shtetl* generally had a population of at least 2,000 people, sometimes approaching 10,000. The large cities had populations in the hundreds of thousands. Only Jews called such a community a *shtetl*, and a largely Christian town the same size as a *shtetl* was not referred to as a *shtetl*. Gentile vernacular did not have a word for *shtetl*, they merely called it “a small Jewish town.” Almost every *shtetl* had at least one church, as this was the founding rationale for initial settlement. Over time, Jewish dwellings surrounded the churches and monasteries. The typical *shtetl* was made up of intermingled and incongruous subcultures—Orthodox Jews and feudal-like peasants. If Jews had a class system, the ‘cultured’ big-city Jews were at the high end, and the *shtetl* Jews were at the low end.

The *shtetl* was the foundation of Jewish life in this region for hundreds of years, during which Jewish life centered on the synagogue and the marketplace. Many *shtetlach* had several synagogues, as well as significant and world-famous educational institutions. Other institutions that might be found in a *shtetl* included: a Hebrew school, a *mikveh* (ritual bath), a Jewish cemetery, a cultural house or playhouse for Jewish theatrical productions, plus public services such as a municipal building, a medical clinic, and a cinema. Some people considered the *shtetlach* as picturesque, with their mostly wooden buildings and unpaved streets. Other people saw little charm or merit in dusty, puddle-filled streets, ramshackle buildings, roaming animals, and shoeless peasants. Jewish traditions, folkways, and cohesion were well preserved in the *shtetl* environment, which allowed Jewish life to go on in a way unique throughout the world. These poor rural communities were isolated from most modern technology and outside disruptive influences and stimuli. It was not uncommon for some *shtetl* Jews to speak only Yiddish their entire lives, plus perhaps some Hebrew. Some ‘progressive’ Jews regarded the passivity, backwardness, and traditionalism of the *shtetl* as a stranglehold on Jewish advancement. Others thought that the *shtetl* was a safe haven and bastion for preservation of Jewish values and traditions, with a close sense of Jewish community and continuity, without the distraction of sinful materialism.



While the *shtetlach* were a fraction of the size of major cities, *shtetlach* were much larger than the tiny *dorfs* (villages or hamlets) that dotted the landscape. These *dorfs* were often no more than a group of thatch-roofed houses, scattered on a stretch of dirt road and in the surrounding woods. A *dorf* might consist of no more than 40 or 50 families, several hundred people at most, and sometimes even less. Since the *dorfs* had no commercial or religious institutions, the *shtetl* was also the center of vitality for the neighboring *dorfs*. *Dorfs* were therefore often located close to the *shtetlach*, and associated with them. Municipal census and tax records usually included the *dorfs* in the records of the closest town or *shtetl*.

Some *dorfs* were so small that there were not enough Jews to form a *minyan* (10 Jewish men required for services). If there were enough Jewish families in a *dorf*, it might have had a *cheder*, the traditional Jewish elementary school. The old-fashioned *cheders* taught only Hebrew language and prayers, and the teachers were often rabbis or *shochets* rather than lay teachers. The most common means of transport from the *dorf* to anywhere was by foot or by horse-drawn wagon. Some *dorfs* had only one or two Jewish families, who lived in the *dorf* where they worked. The Kozlowski family was the only Jewish family in the tiny *dorf* of Mishukovitz, and Ida's father Chaim was the lone village blacksmith. It was not a pleasurable situation for the family. Only a very small percentage of the Jews in Eastern Europe lived in these *dorfs*, and the majority lived in the *shtetlach* or larger communities.

The weekly market day in the *shtetl* was the most important day. The streets became filled with horse-drawn wagons loaded with goods and produce, and peddlers selling their wares and services. The activities started at dawn, and transformed sleepy and depressed towns into noisy and colorful ones for the day. The traders used the proceeds to buy goods or a drink in the *shtetl* stores. Few people got rich, as the folks of these rural regions barely scraped out a living. Many people lived near poverty, but may not have realized it since they had the basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. Truly poor people in the towns were taken care of by religious charities; the *dorfs* were so small that they had neither destitute people nor charitable agencies. The large cities were generally wealthier, and there were some rich people—businessmen, factory owners, and tradesmen. The upper class Jews were merchants dealing with lumber, grain, textiles, and horses.

By the late 1920s, another major influence was affecting Jewish life in all of Europe. Zionism was emerging, greatly influencing the thinking and activities of many Jews in an otherwise stifling environment. Zionism was especially alluring to the younger generation, which realized that there could be a better life than their parents endured, and a place free of religious persecution. However, many parts of the Jewish community did not accept Zionism. The older generation for the most part was not Zionist-inclined or adventuresome, and religious Jews especially rejected the notion of a return to the Promised Land before the appearance of the messiah. Socialist Jews opposed emigration, not believing that they could ever get millions of Jews forged into a strong nation. Their desire was to change the social structure in Poland into a desirable situation. The Polish government was indirectly helpful to Zionist goals, encouraging emigration of Poland's undesirable and poor minorities during times of economic and social problems.



Poor economic and social conditions and periodic pogroms were strong incentives for young Zionists to yearn for a better life outside of the *shtetl* environment. Things were not much better in even the large cities of Eastern Europe, as anti-Semitism and pogroms were not restricted to small villages. 'Pogrom' means 'devastation' in Russian, and these anti-Jewish rampages often included beatings, robbery, rape, killings, hangings, mutilations, and destruction of homes. In some cities in Czarist Russia, where pogroms were invented, pogroms were annual traditional events. Participants included common thugs, religious bigots, bored peasants, drunkards, morons, or anyone else with a real or imagined score to settle or time on their hands. Pogroms were frequently 'contagious', and when locals heard of a pogrom in a neighboring town, they often decided to spread the good deed. They either initiated their own pogroms, or traveled to the next town to join their neighbor's rampage, or sometimes just to observe the festivities as if at a fair.

The main destination of many young Jews was the Land of Israel, which was then a protectorate of Great Britain called Palestine. Britain, historically aligned with the Arabs, severely limited Jewish entry into Palestine, despite the official promises embraced in the Balfour Declaration. Despite this, a large number of Jews entered their homeland, legally or illegally. A less desirable destination was the U.S., which had imposed severe immigration quotas during this period. In fact, during the early 1930s, more Jews entered Argentina than America, despite its Statue of Liberty 'welcoming the world's needy masses'. Argentina welcomed immigrants, and at that time, it was one of the world's most prosperous nations.

At some much earlier point, the Germanic (Ashkenazic) influence became dominant in terms of written and oral communication in all of Eastern Europe. Yiddish language and literature had flourished in Poland, and over time became the common and unifying language of Jews throughout the world. By the year 1500, Yiddish was being spoken in communities in Poland, Lithuania, Italy, and Palestine. By 1750, Yiddish had spread to most of Europe and was in widespread use in America, and became the practical and global Jewish language. The primary language of the *shtetl* Jew was Yiddish, in all countries. Yiddish absorbed and combined several other stocks: German, Hebrew, Aramaic, Romance and Slavic, and there are many dialects, mostly differing in pronunciation. Because of the universality of Yiddish, even the Jews in Eastern Europe that had come from non-German lands could communicate with their brethren around the world. Some older Jews used Yiddish exclusively, never learning the local language. Gentiles living in heavily Jewish areas in Europe, or even the U.S., often spoke Yiddish also, an unexceptional occurrence in the early 1900s. Yiddish was of course the main language of the Segalowicz and Kozlowski families, although they were also fluent in the Byelorussian, Russian and Polish languages, as well as some Hebrew and a smattering of other languages. When the Segalowicz family arrived in the U.S., Leon and Rosaline spoke only Yiddish; Rubin and Ida spoke several other languages.

In this setting, Rubin Segal was born as Reuven Segalowicz, and Ida was born as Chaya Kozlowski. Reuven and Chaya were their true first names, and the names Rubin and Ida did not exist until 1949.



## THE SEGALOWICZ FAMILY

### The *Shtetl* of Ivenets

*Ivenets was once a peaceful shtetl surrounded by woods and wheat fields. Only 70 of its 3,000 Jews survived the mass killings that ravaged this quiet town. Rubin and his sister Sonia were the only members of the Segalowicz family to survive. Rubin's mother, two younger sisters, and Sonia's two baby children were killed by the Nazis.*

Reuven Segalowicz was born in the moderately sized *shtetl* of Ivenets (also spelled Ivinitz, Iwieniec, Ivenetz). Historically, Ivenets was part of Belarus, which itself was often part of either of the larger neighboring countries of Russia or Poland, depending on which country dominated this region and how Belarus and Poland were divided up. Today Ivenets is (once again) in the Republic of Belarus. If asked about our historic European ancestral nationality, Rubin's family and descendants can correctly say that we are Russian, Byelorussian, or Polish. Alternatively, we can also accurately say: "Rubin's family came from a small town near the border between Russia and Poland, that was ruled by each country at different times."

Ivenets was situated on the Volma River, far from main roads or railroads, bucolically surrounded by dense woods and fields of wheat. Maple, pine, ash, linden, and oak trees grew dense and huge in the primeval forests, and many trees were over 500 years old. The wheat supplied the town's two flour mills, one located at each end of the town, and the river turned the wheels of the mills. Before the 1930s, the length of the entire *shtetl* was less than one mile, and its width was less than two blocks. By 1930, it was considerable larger, with a town square surrounded by small shops. Market day in Ivenets was always on Wednesdays, which was the major business day of the week. The main market was held in the town square, while a nearby area was reserved for trade in livestock such as cattle, pigs, and sheep. On Sundays, all businesses were forced to close, and owners were fined if their stores were caught open. Jewish businesses were also voluntarily closed on *Shabbos*. There was regular transportation from Ivenets to the larger towns and cities. In the early days, this was by way of horse-drawn wagons that transported goods. People could also occasionally get rides on these wagons if there was room. This service was best used in dry weather, as the bumpy, muddy, and steep roads quickly became impassable during heavy rains, and passengers became assistants to the horses, pushing and pulling the wagons. By the 1930s, trucks largely replaced the horse-drawn wagons for hauling purposes, but there was still no bus transportation.

Until 1868, there was one Catholic Church in Ivenets, founded in 1606. Almost all towns of any size had churches, as the church and the central market place are what brought people to the town. During some earlier period of Russian rule, it forbade maintenance of Catholic churches, and the one in Ivenets was temporarily closed. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the nobleman Dragonchev bought the land on which the town was located, and he treated the Jews favorably. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jews were able to buy the land on which their homes or shops were situated, which they had formerly leased. As Jews moved into this friendly environment, Ivenets became a largely Jewish town, a *shtetl*.



Few of the Jews of Ivenets were farmers, although most owned chickens and livestock for their own use. Most Jewish families in Ivenets were merchants, craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, or peddlers. Some of the more prosperous Jews engaged in businesses including leather, livestock, timber, lumber, and sawmill work. Jewish businesses and trades were customarily handed down from father to son unless the merchant or his family left town or changed occupations. The Christians of Ivenets were occupied mostly in farming or in manufacturing the orange-colored clay vessels, utensils, and tiles for which Ivenets was famous. There were big deposits of this special clay in the area, and the clay itself was transported by wagon for sale to other manufacturing locations.

On the main street, Koidnovi Street, there were both Jewish and Christian homes, including the Segalowicz home. The Jewish front yards often contained flower plantings, as well as wandering pigs or chickens from an unfenced neighbor's yard. The back yards served as a means of livelihood or subsistence, with livestock pens and vegetable patches fertilized by animal manure. Laundry was hung to dry on a clothesline, or on the roofs. The houses were all made from lumber milled from the trees of the local forests. Jewish homes were of a rather standard style in terms of rooms and layout, although the number of rooms varied. Houses in the typical *shtetl* were close to each other, like row houses, and so the plots were all rather narrow in width but long front-to-back. Few of the houses were truly old, because the wood construction and the proximity of the houses allowed fires to quickly spread. Fires were most severe in the winter, when water could not be drawn from the frozen rivers. Additional Jewish homes were not added to the town in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as emigration kept growing faster than the Jewish population.

Ivenets had two *schuls*, an 'old one' and a 'new one', at some distance from each other. The new one was very large, better furnished, and situated closer to the Jewish homes than the old one, which was located in an empty field. The new one even had an 'attached' toilet. This may have been only an outhouse adjacent to the synagogue, not an interior toilet. It turned out that the poorer Jews belonged to the old *schul*, while the better-off Jews frequented the new one. Both *schuls* were very crowded on Jewish holidays, since the Jewish population was over 3,000 people. Women of course sat in a section separated from the men. Seats in the *schuls* were bought and owned by the family and were passed down from father to son. They could even be mortgaged. Rubin's family belonged to the old synagogue. During weekdays, Yeshiva boys from neighboring towns studied in the *schuls*, taking their turn to eat with local Jews, as was the custom in Eastern Europe.

Before the 1920s, Jews and Christians lived in peace in this town for many years. Some Christians learned to speak Yiddish in order to communicate with their Jewish neighbors. This is actually not surprising, as much of this region was multi-lingual due to the convergence of geographical borders, nationalities and cultures. Most Gentiles who spoke Yiddish spoke haltingly, or with a telltale "accent", and of course were easily recognized as *goyim* by Jews. Some older Jews did not speak the local languages well or at all. If they did not have to deal with Christians, Jews could get by speaking only Yiddish with their families and neighbors. Foreign books, novels and textbooks, were widely available in Yiddish translations.



In general, there was less anti-Semitism in this *shtetl* and its immediate surroundings than in neighboring central and western Poland. During much earlier times of pogroms in neighboring villages, there are written records of the leaders of the Christians of Ivenets protecting “their Jews” by pressuring their fellow Christians who were inclined to form or join the pogroms. After the First World War, times became worse for Jews in virtually all countries in this region because of the deteriorating economic conditions and other factors. Even without the poor world economy of the 1930s, the rural towns in this region were never really well off, and the town citizens were mostly poor. However, as in all areas, some Jewish families that owned businesses or manufacturing factories were relatively well off.

The truly wealthy people were mostly found in the larger and more industrialized cities. In the large cities, a higher portion of Jews owned businesses or practiced professions such as law, medicine, or teaching. Cities were electrified, had decent transportation, and civic services. More houses in the large cities were likely to be of masonry rather than wood. While the majority of Jews in the *shtetlach* may have considered themselves ‘middle class’ or ‘comfortable’ because they had adequate shelter and never went hungry, by today’s standards they would likely be at subsistence levels, below the poverty line. Many Jews had more than one job or profession, and in some cases wives also worked. Not going hungry only meant that your stomach did not go empty, even if it was filled mostly with potatoes.

Poor as the residents of a typical *shtetl* might be in terms of material possessions, only a few people considered themselves needy. The very poor Jews were always helped out by *tzedakah* (charity) from local families and religious organizations. Charity to the poor in the form of money was very meager, often no more than the equivalent of pennies per day. It was easier to give charity in the form of food, services, or spiritual consolation. Rubin still remembers that his grandmother would go door-to-door each Thursday to collect food and goods for *tzedakah*, which she would distribute to the poor each Friday so they could have a more enjoyable *Shabbos*. Shabbat officially started with the candle lighting—‘*benching licht*’. The *Shabbos* meal on Friday evenings was always festive, with the table full of special foods not eaten on the other days of the week, such as *challah*, chicken, and *gefilte* fish. White tablecloths, pressed clothes, polished silverware, and songs made Friday evenings special. On *Erev Shabbos*, all Jewish homes seemed wealthy.

Ivenets was located between the larger nearby towns of Vilna, Lida and Slonim. Most of the relatively small *shtetlach* had important links to the large towns or cities in their vicinity, and these towns had significant roles in the lives of Ida and Rubin and their families. These larger towns had better schools, universities, hospitals, transportation, and larger civic and commercial enterprises than the *shtetlach* could support. The historically important Lithuanian city of Vilna, located just across the border in Polish-controlled territory, had a population of 200,000, with nearly 60,000 Jews. Vilna had been a major center of Jewish culture and education for centuries. Lida and Slonim had populations of less than 30,000 each, both approximately one-third Jewish. Amazingly, virtually all of the doctors in Slonim were Jewish. The Jewish population of Slonim of 10,000 doubled in 1941, as Jews fled there to evade the Nazi regime in western Poland. The largest city in the region was Minsk, the



capital of Belarus, 35 miles east. Minsk had a population of over 270,000, 30% Jewish. Minsk's population was decimated to 50,000 by the end of WWII, with almost no Jews remaining. A smaller but important town in the region was Mir, with a population of less than 5,000, one-half Jewish. Mir boasted the world-famous Mir Yeshiva and Rabbinical University, at which Jews from all over the world studied. The Mir Yeshiva was destroyed in the war, but there are now Mir Yeshivas in New York and Israel commemorating this renowned school.

Throughout Ivenets' last 200 years, Jews were always an important part of the community. Census and tax records were carefully kept by the governments and by regional Jewish councils that were responsible for Jewish activities and tax collection. An 1811 census listed 169 Jewish men in the *shtetl*. By 1847, the number of Jews had grown dramatically to over 2,300. By 1897, the number of Jews decreased to about 1,300, and comprised 50% of the total population of 2,700. By 1921, the Polish census listed 945 Jews out of the town's population of 2,200 residents, 40% of the total. By the 1930s Ivenets had a population of almost 6,000, 50% Jewish, and was considered a moderate sized, well-off *shtetl*.

It was not surprising that the number of Jews in some *shtetlach* decreased during this time, even if the town was considered well off. In some cases, entire populations were diminished by periodical epidemics. Economic and political conditions affected Jewish migration greatly, with Jews often leaving the more intolerable areas. There was insufficient social and economic satisfaction for many younger *shtetl* Jews, who were not willing to accept the never-ending hardships their elders had endured for centuries. Unemployment, unexciting professions, persecution, and pogroms did not endear the young to *shtetl* life. Anti-Semitism piled economic and social difficulties on young Jews, no matter where they lived.

Both Ida and Rubin had relatives who had left Europe for the U.S., and Ida even had relatives in South Africa. Very often, and in the case of our relatives, brave 16- and 17-year old teenagers left home with nothing more than an address of distant relatives who were often less than welcoming, just hoping to establish a better life. Our relatives uncle Dave, aunt Rose (from Albany), Rubin's aunts Ida, Fanny, and Rhoda and others came to the U.S. in this way. They came speaking no English, with few skills, no possessions other than the clothes on their back, and a will to establish a better life. For the most part, they all succeeded.

By 1941, the population of Ivenets had decreased drastically, impacted by the war. By then, only 330 Jewish households remained, totaling just 1,200 people. Of this number, only 70 people survived the mass killings that ravaged this quiet town.

In the immediate Segalowicz family, only Rubin and his sister Sonia survived the war. Rubin's mother, two younger sisters, Sonia's two baby children, and other relatives were all killed by the Nazis. In total, Rubin lost over 57 close relatives to the Nazis: mother, sisters, niece, nephew, aunts, uncles, and first cousins. Ten families were completely wiped out—parents and children. By the 1990s, memories and a large common grave were all that remained of Jewish life in the *shtetl* of Ivenets.



## Rubin's Childhood

*Rubin's father died when he was nine, and he was Bar Mitzvahed at the age of 12 to signify his untimely early adulthood. He studied in Yeshivas distant from his home and family, but stopped his education at the age of 16 and began working to support his mother and three sisters.*

Reuven Segalowicz (sometimes called Rufkeh) was born in the *shtetl* of Ivenets on July 15, 1920. The Segalowicz family had lived in the Ivenets area as far back as anyone could remember, although the family name was originally Levin or Levine. A family member changed the surname in the 1800s to avoid being drafted into the Czar's army. Levine was a Jewish name, a prime draft and persecution target, while Segalowicz was a more Russian name. The name ending, 'owicz' means 'son of' in Russian, similar to the American ending 'son' as in Samuelson.

Rubin's family came from a long line of pious and observant Jews. Rubin's uncle was a Rabbi in the nearby city of Mir. Rubin's father Leib had two professions: he sold livestock to the Polish Army and he was also a wholesale meat merchant. During the Jewish holidays, Leib also served as a *chazan*, a cantor, to supplement his income. Leib's partner in the meat business was Zeesel Rubinstein. Years later, Rubin's family, including sons Leon and Aaron, would buy their suits and coats from Zeesel's brother, Alter Rubinstein, who owned an upscale men's clothing store on East Broadway in Manhattan's famous 'lower East Side'.

Leib was a religious and educated man, known for his kindness and good nature. He was well over six feet tall, very thin, with large blue eyes, a short and neat dark beard, and a moustache. He played the violin splendidly, and would leave the window open while playing so his neighbors could enjoy the music. During the war, Rubin left his father's valuable German-made violin with a Gentile neighbor for safekeeping. He retrieved it after the war when he went back to Ivenets to look for his mother's grave. He carried the violin with him to Poland, where he sold it for 10 *zlotys*, a few cents, to buy food for his family.

Rubin's mother, Roslyn (Bloch) came from Ivye (Ee-v-ye), a *shtetl* 30 miles west of Ivenets. Fatefully, this was also the *shtetl* near the home of Ida Kozlowski. Roslyn's family had lived here for generations, and it was a large and close family. Rubin's mother had seven living siblings. She had four brothers living in Europe—Yankel, Chaneh, Moshe, and David—plus 4 other brothers who died very young. Rubin's mother also had three sisters living in America: Ida (Chaya Moosha), Fanny, and Rhoda, all relatively well off. The Segalowicz family received packages of clothing and other goods from Ida and Rhoda in the U.S., especially after Rubin's father died. His aunt Ida sometimes sent Rubin's mother shirts with 2 dollars sewn into the sleeves, a dollar bill in each sleeve. Rubin remembers wearing his cousin Irving's handed-down clothes as a youngster in Ivenets. By the end of the war, all of Roslyn's brothers and most of their families had been killed by the Nazis.

Rubin was named after his paternal great grandfather, also Reuven Segalowicz. Rubin had three sisters, Sonia, Frieda, and Moosha, born in 1915, 1927, and 1928, respectively. Rubin also had a brother born before Sonia, who died shortly after



birth. Of his siblings, only his sister Sonia survived the war, although she lost both of her two young children to the Nazis. After the war, Sonia and Joe had two more children: Sidney, born in Minsk; and Rose, born in London.

By the standards of that time, Rubin grew up in a comfortable middle class home. There were no luxuries in the Segalowicz home, but Rubin has only pleasant memories of his residence. They had a relatively large house on Koidnovi Street, Ivenets's main street. Like the other houses, it was on a narrow plot of land with a very large back yard. The Segalowicz house had a dining room, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a big hallway, and a basement used to store vegetables. The privilege of being the only boy meant that Rubin slept in his own room. In many homes, young children and adults often shared bedrooms and beds, sometimes as many as six to a bed. This was actually welcome in the winters, as the crowded bed kept everyone warm. In the summertime, many children slept in the roomier and cooler barn.

The house did not have its own well, and water had to be hand-pumped from the town well and then carried home in buckets. The large back yard contained a vegetable garden, an outhouse, and a barn that could hold 20 cows. Ivenets was electrified in 1935, and homes then had a single light bulb, with a long cord so it could be carried from room to room. Before that year, either candles or kerosene lamps were used for lighting. Some wealthy homes had radios, but there were no other electric appliances in the Segalowicz home. A large central brick oven was used for baking and cooking, and was also used to heat the house. The oven exterior was covered with ceramic tiles, and had side ledges on which food was heated. The top sill of the oven was so large that children slept on it to keep warm. There was also a central fireplace abutting the walls of several rooms, with several small side shelves on which food pots were kept warm. Some of the more valuable objects in the home included a mirror, a chiming clock, and the ubiquitous samovar—a large, ornate brass Russian-style tea urn with integrated coal heater.

One wall of the central living room was completely covered with family photographs. When the family was forced to leave their home and belongings and move into the ghetto, the photographs were left behind. No photograph of Rubin's father survived the war, and only two photos exist of Rubin's mother Roslyn. One is a sepia tone photo of young Roslyn with infant Sonia, which Rubin later had colorized. The other picture is a family photo taken just after Rubin's father died.

Leib hoped Rubin would become a *shochet*, a meat slaughterer, educated in ritual butchering methods, trained to assure that the animal was slaughtered swiftly and humanely. *Shochets* had to complete a rigorous curriculum of study at a Yeshiva, similar to rabbis, and were well respected. Because of the similar training and education, many rabbis held second jobs as *shochets*, and many *shochets* taught in the *cheders*. Rubin began school at the age of five, and did well. He attended a *cheder* in Ivenets where he was taught religion, prayers, and Hebrew. Secular studies were left for the higher grades. Rubin's days were filled with the usual childhood activities; family, school, friends, and sports—mostly soccer. In the wintertime, Rubin would go skiing with skis he made from wooden barrel staves, somehow binding his shoes to the skis. Rubin had many friends from the *shtetl* and



from the Zionist youth organization Betar. Among his good friends were “Yankel, Don, Avremel, Simon, and Reuven Oshman” (Aaron Oshman’s brother). Not one of Rubin’s childhood friends survived the war. They all died either in mass killings, or fighting in the partisans, or in concentration camps.

Rubin has very fond memories of his father Leib, remembering some details from when he was barely four years old. However, his memories are few, because Leib Segalowicz developed an illness in 1929, spent three months in a Vilna hospital, was sent home and died of cancer two months later at the age of 44. Rubin was 9 years old and his entire world changed. The family spent whatever savings they had on Leib’s hospital bills, and they were left in difficult financial straits. Even at this time though, while she had little money for herself and her family, Rubin’s mother would collect *tzedakah* every week, and distribute it among other poor people before *Shabbos*, continuing her mother’s tradition.

During his father’s last days, Leib made Rubin promise that regardless of what would happen he would complete his studies at the Yeshiva. Rubin continued his education in the famous city of Mir, living with his uncle, his father’s brother Rabbi Meyer Segalowicz. Rubin’s uncle would wake him up early each morning to say *Kaddish* for his father. He would go to Yeshiva for six days a week, the normal school schedule, and then study the Talmud with his uncle Meyer for several hours each day after school. Rubin’s school life as a ‘*Yeshiva bocher*’ (student, literally Yeshiva boy) was typical. Yeshiva students in Eastern Europe during those times often studied at some distance from their homes, as many towns did not have Yeshivas. The course work was difficult, and many students did not complete the curriculum. Students had no time for part-time jobs, and it was customary for Yeshiva students to eat their meals at the homes of local Jewish families. New students often just showed up at the Yeshiva, not knowing where they would eat or stay, but knowing that they would be taken care of. In return, it was considered a *mitzvah*, a good deed, to give a “day’s food” or an “eating day” to a Yeshiva student. This also served the family providing the food, since poor families who could not contribute money to charity could instead perform this charitable deed.

Rubin ate his meals at a different person’s home each day. He was a very bashful youngster, and did not like to eat when anyone was around. If a person entered the room in which he was eating, he would stop eating and leave. In one home, he was told that he would eat after the family meal. He waited patiently and hungrily, and saw that at the end of the meal the housewife collected the leftovers from her family and put them into a plate for Rubin. He did not eat anything that evening. He told his uncle Meyer about this, and his uncle gave him some money so Rubin could eat at the Yeshiva kitchen instead. Rubin was given the equivalent of perhaps ten cents, and from this meager amount, Rubin would eat and even save a pittance. There were no between-meal snacks, no treats, and Rubin remained thin and lonely, growing up by himself, away from his devoted family. If he was lucky he was able to stay or eat with distant relatives, but he often relied on strangers. Today, Rubin and Ida repay the charity he received as a Yeshiva student by contributing to Yeshivas in Israel. Very specifically, they contribute to those Yeshivas whose students serve in the Israeli army.



Rubin was Bar Mitzvahed at the age of 12 instead of 13, in the synagogue in Mir, where he was studying at that time. The atypical early Bar Mitzvah age was traditional for fatherless boys, signifying the untimely and unfortunate early manhood forced upon them. At his Bar Mitzvah, Rubin wore his father's *tefillin* (phylacteries). Unlike the custom in America, Rubin did not receive or wear a *tallit* at his Bar Mitzvah, as the Ashkenazy custom there was that only married men wore a *tallit*. The typical Bar Mitzvah celebration at that time was a routine ritual, with none of today's extravagances. After Rubin said the prayers, the Torah reading and HafTorah, there was the 'party'. The celebration was a *kiddush*, which consisted of herring, *lekach* (honey cake) or sponge cake, and of course, some *schnapps*.

Following his Bar Mitzvah, Rubin changed schools and studied in the Yeshiva in the *shtetl* of Ivye, where his mother's family lived. Rubin's trip back home was over 30 miles, which took Rubin six to seven hours on a bicycle. If Rubin got a ride on a wagon, it was easier but took even longer. Therefore, Rubin mostly lived in Ivye, living with his maternal grandmother Kuneh Bloch. Coincidentally, Rubin's widowed grandmother rented a single room in the house owned by Rifka Baksht, Chaya Kozlowski's aunt. Fatefully, Ida lived with her aunt Rifka on weekdays while attending the Ivye public school, attending Hebrew school each day after public school. It was here, distant from both of their families, the Rubin and Ida met.

When Rubin and Ida first met, he was 12 and she was 10. They soon became very close friends, and their friends would tease them by saying that they were boyfriend and girlfriend. Like most of their friends, both Rubin and Ida were raised in caring families that were devoted to Jewish heritage and tradition. They both became active members of 'Betar', the Zionist youth organization founded in Latvia a few years earlier. Betar gave them a purpose and social life that was otherwise not available in any *shtetl*. One of the Betar leaders in Poland at this time was another short young man by the name of Menachem Begin, who would later join the right-wing extremist Irgun, and would eventually be Israel's Prime Minister. Later, as he was planning a life in Israel, Rubin also intended to join the Irgun. Betar and its Zionist ideals played a big part in the lives of Ida and Rubin and their families.

At that time, Eastern European Jewry was at a crossroads, with many influential people questioning the value of endless and future-less *shtetl* life. Most of the activism came from the younger generation, which wanted to break away from their stagnant lives, and change both their environment and the world. Socialist Jews wanted to transform their host countries. A small portion of young Jews joined the Communists, idealistically hoping that the Marxist system would resolve their religious and nationality issues. The reality was of course different. In fact, Communism denied the existence of a national Jewish identity, and Judaism was targeted for systematic elimination. At that same time, anti-Semitism in Germany was also on a dramatic and unprecedented increase. In 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany, and remained in power for 12 years during which 30 million people died. Hitler's virulent rhetoric was a catalyst for the leaders of the Zionist movement, who viewed their historic homeland in Palestine as the only safe haven.



A large number of younger Jews became fervent Zionists, hoping to rebuild and establish the Jewish homeland in Israel. Opinions differed on how to achieve this homeland, and what type of country it should be. There were Rightist, Leftist, 'Labor', militant and religious Zionists, among others. Labor Zionists wanted a socialist agricultural state and felt that with enough Jewish settlement in Palestine, the Jewish State would eventually be formed. Revisionist Zionists, the New Nationalist Movement founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 'revised' the older socialistic objectives of the mainstream Zionists into a highly militant stance. They believed that force would be needed to establish a Jewish Homeland in Israel, and were ready to fight the Arabs and the British to reach this objective. Betar was part of this forceful, militant movement. Some young Zionists spoke only Hebrew in order to be better prepared for their life in Palestine, and in rejection of the local languages.

Betar, the youth arm of the Revisionist Zionists, was named after the fortress stronghold of Jewish resistance that held up for three-and-a-half years during the uprising against the Romans led by Bar Kochba. Betar was in many ways a paramilitary organization, reflecting the values of its parent organization. Jabotinsky even had an official dress code for Betar: brown shirts symbolizing the soil of Palestine. Betar stressed pride and strength of the Jewish people, taught their young disciples the history of the Jewish nation, and about Jewish heroes of the past. The Betar youth were taught that Jews were not always enslaved, persecuted, and insulted, and that they need not accept being called "dirty *Zhids*" by the ignorant *schkotzim* (young Gentile bums). In Betar, Rubin learned that after 2,000 years of maltreatment Jews needed to fight for their freedom and their rights.

The worldly Betar leaders were attuned to the ominous stirrings in Germany, and to the facts of history. Chillingly, Jabotinsky was literally prophetic in his vision of the future. By 1938, before the invasions and mass killings that would soon come to Eastern Europe, Jabotinsky delivered speeches that were so foreboding that few took him at his word: "Catastrophe is coming closer. I know that you are not seeing this because you are immersed in your daily worries. Whoever of you will escape from this catastrophe will live to see the exalted moment of the rebirth of a Jewish state." Jabotinsky traveled through all the major cities of Europe, delivering his message in the many languages he spoke fluently. He never came to the small towns of Ivenets or Ivye, but his speeches were read, re-played, and discussed during Betar meetings. Rubin and Ida still remember the following ominous words from his speeches: "Get out of Europe now. The ground is burning under your feet."

Jabotinsky's prophetic warnings became reality, as did his vision for Israel. He wrote a will in 1935 stating that he must be buried outside Palestine, but his remains were to be transferred to the land of Israel "only at the instruction of the eventual Jewish government that shall be established there". He died during a Betar meeting in Monroe, New York in 1940, and was buried in Pine Lawn, NY. In 1964, his body was moved for burial on Jerusalem's Mount Herzl, at the behest of Israel's government. Rubin and Ida joined the thousands who attended this second funeral procession as his body was taken to the airport for transfer to Israel, as he had foreseen.



Barely teenagers, Rubin and Ida did not follow international political developments, or pay attention to the events starting to unfold in Germany. There were no radios in their homes, and 'current events' discussions focused on the local market day and *schul* events. People labored from morning until evening, immersed in their work. Perhaps in some more educated or sophisticated big-city families, there were deeper discussions, but the Segalowicz and Kozlowski families were poor rural families pre-occupied with life's daily burdens. The people in the *shtetlach* and *dorfs* lived in blissful ignorance. In the dynamic Betar organization, however, Rubin and Ida found both an exciting social environment and an awareness of a better existence that optimistic teenagers took to heart. Like most Betar members, they had no doubt that their life plans would include *aliyah* (literally 'rising' or 'ascent') to Israel. Rubin and Ida still remember the first lines of the Betar anthem, which were and remain, as follows, in Hebrew of course:

***"From the pit of decay and dust;  
With blood and sweat;  
Will arise a race;  
Proud, generous, and fierce.***

This prophecy would be farsighted for Rubin, Ida, and all of European Jewry. However, the pits would be fouler than poetic 'pits of decay and dust'. They would be actual earthen pits of decaying and burning dead bodies of their brethren. There would be much more blood than sweat. Nevertheless, the Jewish race and the land of Zion did arise. Jabotinsky's predictions all came true, and his legacy still exists. Betar remains a global youth organization, dedicated to proactive Zionism and Jewish community service. [David Segal organized the Betar student organization at Stony Brook University, and later was national president of the National Tagar movement, the university campus offshoot of Betar.]

Betar activities and Zionist dreams were only diversions from Rubin's hard life. When Rubin came home, he was heartbroken to see his mother's struggles. In addition to caring for a home and family, Roslyn suffered from asthma, and many routine tasks were difficult for her. Her only source of income came from selling beef to neighbors, a skill she learned by watching Leib. On Wednesdays, Roslyn would go to the market and select the meat that her neighbors ordered. The cow was slaughtered and cut into sections, and delivered to her by wagon on Thursday, so her customers could have it for Shabbat. She cut the sections on the kitchen table using knives, scissors, and saws, and sold the hide to leather tanners. Rubin sometimes helped her with this hard work. Roslyn's income from this part-time vocation was minimal, reduced further by her generosity. She often gave meat to poorer neighbors and refugees, telling them to pay whenever they could.

Rubin continued his education, but by the age of 16, he could not bear to see his mother suffer any more. Rubin's next-door neighbor was a painter, and Rubin liked the craft, including drawing and artwork. He decided to leave school and became a painter. However, Ivenets already had enough painters, and there was no need for another one. In an act of destiny, his mother's family in Ivye, where he had attended school, was able to help him out. Roslyn's first cousin, David Kuznetz, helped Rubin get an enviable position as an apprentice painter in Ivye.



[David Kuznetz was the grandfather of Leah Eckstein, the wife of Natan Eckstein, of Ramat Gan Israel. The Segals have remained friendly with Leah and her sisters Miriam and Dahlia to this day. When Leah's son Yoav and his wife Ricky came for an extended stay in the U.S. in 1998, Rubin and Ida found them an apartment near their home. Yoav and Ricky became 'part of the family' during their stay.]

The painting trade was considered a respected and lucrative profession. Rubin's boss was Yehoshua Lebbe Schmukler, who now lives in Israel (he was 95 in year 2001). As was customary, Rubin lived with his boss during his apprenticeship. Apprentices usually trained the first year with no wages. In fact, applicants for an apprenticeship usually paid fees, approximately 250 *zlotys*, (\$50), plus training expenses. Since Rubin was fatherless and his boss liked him, Rubin was not asked for the fee, and was even paid one *zloty* (20 cents!) a week the first year. After training, a painter's salary could be between 40 and 60 *zlotys* a month, depending on his skill. Rubin quickly earned the 60 *zlotys*, equivalent then to approximately \$12—a good salary. By comparison, an unskilled laborer at a mill earned 12 *zlotys* for a 72-hour, 6-day workweek. No wonder such unskilled workers led a poverty life-style, and had to have other sources of sustenance, such as livestock or vegetable garden. However, painters worked only 7 months a year because the winters were too cold to paint houses. When a house was painted, all the furniture was moved outdoors, as paint covers were not used. Jews often painted their homes just before the Passover holiday, when the entire home got a yearly cleaning. The paint was only a whitewash, brightened up with color. Despite the meager wages, Rubin sent much of his earnings home to his mother. Rubin remained a painter for over 3 years, until the 1939 Nazi invasion, when he was 19.

During the off-season, Rubin went home and helped his mother take care of his siblings, the family's cows, and their home. In 1938, Rubin's older sister Sonia had married Joe Starkman, and she soon had two children, who Roslyn sometimes cared for. His younger sisters were both under 10 years old, not much help to his mother, who had her hands full.

In 1938, Rubin first encountered the anti-Semitism that was starting to spread across Europe. Rubin fought back, and characteristically, overcame his foes. While walking with two friends, they were attacked by a large gang of Gentiles, who were supposedly their friends. The *schkatzim* beat Rubin and his friends, while cursing them with anti-Semitic epithets. Rubin and his friends decided to be prepared for the inevitable next attack. Rubin made himself a pair of heavy 'metal knuckles'; actually lead knuckles made by pouring molten lead into a wooden form that he carved out himself. Another of his friends carried a heavy liquor bottle. His other friend came across a dead horse, cut off its penis, and somehow hid and carried this with him. How he selected such an imaginative weapon of self-defense Rubin did not know then, and cannot figure out now, but still laughs at this memorable weapon. Rubin and his friends were ready, and when the next attack came, the aggressors were mangled so badly that they were left unconscious and bleeding in the street. Rubin's group was afraid the police would arrest them for assault, and they spent the night hiding in a cemetery.



## THE KOZLOWSKI FAMILY

*Ida Kozlowski grew up in the tiny, isolated village of Mishukovitz, in which the Kozlowkis were the only Jewish family. From the age of five, Ida attended school away from home, as there were no schools in Mishukovitz. There was not much of anything in Mishukovitz.*

Chaya (meaning 'life') Kozlowski was born on or about May 15, 1922 in a tiny hamlet (*dorf*) called Mishukovitz (Yiddish name; pronounced Mishkovichi in Polish). Mishukovitz was the hometown of the Kozlowski family, where her father Chaim and all his siblings were born. There were no more than 50 families and perhaps 200 people in this *dorf*. It still exists, but is still so small it does not appear on most maps. There are no census and tax records for small villages such as Mishukovitz, and their statistics were included in those of the larger nearby towns.

The Kozlowski family was the only Jewish family in this hamlet. There was no *schul* in Mishukovitz of course, since a *minyan* (10 Jewish men) could never be formed. The *schul* in the *shtetl* of Ivye was too far to frequent routinely, and so Ida's father prayed at home every day. Occasionally they went to *schul* in the somewhat larger *dorf* of Mikalaiveh, less than two miles away. Mikalaiveh had a grand total of approximately 15 Jewish families, and boasted a Jewish *cheder*. Mikalaiveh even had a small store, and a hostel where travelers could stay. Mishukovitz did not have any school, hostel, or store. Actually, Mishukovitz had very little of anything because of its small size and its distance from larger towns. There was no electricity in Mishukovitz until after the Second World War. Most families could not afford radios or other appliances anyway. To make telephone calls, people traveled to Ivye and used the telephones in either the post office or the municipal building. Horses, wagons, and bicycles were common, but automobiles, trucks, or buses were never seen in Mishukovitz as far as Ida remembers.

Mishukovitz was most directly associated with the closest neighboring *shtetl*, Ivye, about six miles away. The walk to Ivye took two hours, considered a doable trip. Ivye was a relatively small *shtetl* of only several thousand people, but nevertheless important because of its commercial, religious, and civic institutions. Other large towns in the area included Lida and Slonim, which had populations of over 30,000 each. Another *shtetl* in the region was Ivenets, Rubin's hometown, about 30 miles away. Ida's mother, Chanah Leah Lipchin, was originally from the *shtetl* of Karelich, near the large and important town of Novogrudek.

The Kozlowski family does not really talk fondly of Mishukovitz. It was a desolate outpost where they were born, and not an appealing community in which they chose to live. Ida's home life was fine, but she hated living in this backward village, and her siblings and mother shared her feelings. However, no one dwelled on what they could not change. Among positive memories, there were several kind-hearted Gentile neighbors who helped the family survive at several crucial times.

A good response to the question as to where Ida is from might be: "From a very, very tiny village near the *shtetl* of Ivye, governed at various times by Belarus, Poland, or Russia."



## The *Shtetl* of Ivye

*Ivye was a remote, poor agricultural-based shtetl, but its Jewish citizens probably did not consider themselves deprived. Nobody went hungry, and the Jewish citizens accepted their traditional lifestyle.*

The first written records for the small town of Ivye (also Ivie, Iwje, Iŭje) date back to 1538, marked by the establishment of the first church and monastery. It was common for Jewish settlement to follow establishment of a church, as the church assured a populace to do business with. Most likely, the majority of the first Jews in the region did not live in Ivye proper, which was dominated by the church, but probably in its surrounding small villages. The first accounts of Jews in the Ivye region date back to 1626, when the town was mentioned in the records of the Lithuanian Jewish Council. This Council was responsible for Jewish tax collection for the government, and management of Judaic institutions and services. Meticulous records were often kept of people, homes, buildings, occupations, and even livestock. In 1897, there were 570 Jews in Ivye out of 3,600 people. By 1938, Jews comprised more than half of Ivye's 6,000 people. The census figures likely also included the surrounding tiny villages like Mishukovitz.

In the region of Ivye, things were decent for Jews in the early days. This is not surprising, as the first Jews probably settled here because the Kingdom of Poland, including Belarus, were relatively hospitable. However, this changed over time as the regional ruling powers changed. By 1795, when Russia ruled this area, Jews were forced out of the small surrounding villages and had to live in the central town of Ivye. This was part of Queen Catherine-the-Great's decrees on the Jewish 'Pale of Settlement', which closed Russia to Jews while defining where they could live and what businesses they could engage in. Later, as the rules changed and as new immigrants traveled to areas of lesser oppression, Jews were able to settle in the surrounding villages again. Many of these families were called by the names of their ancestral villages or locales. For example, people with family names of Baksht were named after either the town or the forest named Baksht, located near Ivye. Not surprisingly, there are Baksht surnames in the Kozlowski family.

By the 1900s, Ivye had two churches, one Catholic and one Greek (Russian) Orthodox. Later, and until 1939, the Ivye region was mostly under the rule of Polish royalty, with the land passing between generations. The military governors or nobility who owned the land did not live on their estates, preferring either large Polish or foreign cities, and usually visited the towns only to hunt in its game-filled forests. Citizens of the towns paid a tax for the use of the land for their homes, businesses, and farms. Jews often managed the estates of the nobility, who became the prime allies of the Jews against the resentful peasants and the unfriendly Christian church.

Ivye remained a quiet, poor, agricultural-based town into the 1900s. Almost no Jews were farmers, similar to the rest of the region. Although some Jews owned businesses or mills, or were merchants, traders, or artisans, most were very poor. Polish Jews in the rural areas were the poorest of all the Europe's Jews, and many lived below what would be poverty levels today. However, they did not realize they



were poor, they usually did not go hungry, and they accepted their lifestyle. Jews were relatively literate and educated, Jewish charities took care of the truly needy, and the survival rate for Jewish newborns was comparatively high. The tiny hamlets like Mishukovitz were even more austere than the larger towns.

The Ivyenka Stream runs through the town. Nobody knows if the stream was named after the town or vice-versa. In 'the old days,' an elderly Jew sold river water from a barrel on a horse-drawn cart, at one kopek for a pail. Another historic town business was making wooden vessels, plates, and ladles from the trees in the surrounding forests. After World War 1, another Jewish business was making caps from soldiers' used coats and pants. During this war, the Germans dug a water well so deep that the water was allowed to run continuously, without a shut-off valve. A videotape taken of Ivye in 1990 shows the water still running freely.

Ivye had three *schuls*, more than in many larger towns. Two of the *schul* buildings still exist in 2002, although the buildings are now used as warehouses or such. The good-sized masonry buildings appear to have once been quite grand, possibly ornate. Main streets in Ivye included Navarodker and Vilner Streets, on either side of the square, leading to their namesake towns. Many shops were located on these streets, mostly owned by Jewish families. The main streets had a few gas lamps that were lit at night. By the 1930s, the wooden houses had corrugated metal roofs, which replaced the wooden roofs destroyed in an earlier devastating fire. There was bus service to Lida, and an automobile passed through occasionally. There was a "*kleine bahn*" ('small train') station in town. This shuttle went to a 'real' train station 5 miles away, in the *shtetl* of Gavye, from which a train went to Lida and Minsk. Rubin recalls and jokes that "you had to push the shuttle train", and it was so slow that you could easily jump off as it moved.

Germany occupied the region around Ivye for nearly 2 years during World War 1. Neither the occupying German Army nor the ethnic German locals displayed overt anti-Semitism at that time, and Jews received fair treatment from them. Germany prided itself on its highly refined civilization, including its highly assimilated Jews. In the early days of the Nazi occupation, many older Jews who had lived under the Germans in World War 1 naively welcomed the Germans, expecting the same decent treatment they had previously received. Of course, they heard about the persecution and anti-Semitism in Germany, but they had lived with this their entire lives, and did not equate this with mass killing and total genocide.

After the First World War, anti-Semitism in Ivye and its environs actually increased after the Germans left. This was due to the deteriorating economic conditions, mounting nationalism, and the increasingly anti-Jewish policies of the Church. Despite this, Jewish life was rebuilt after 1920, as the resilient East European Jews were used to living under such conditions. Ivye re-established Hebrew schools, Jewish political and cultural organizations, and built its three *schuls*. Today, in 2002, Ivye is a backwater, depressing-looking village, with metal-roofed houses seemingly left over from the 1930s. The main street is finally paved. Two very old Jewish men and a memorial marker for the murdered thousands are the only remnants of a vibrant population.



## Ida Kozlowski

*Ida's father Chaim was a devout man who worked as a blacksmith, as did most of the men in his family. Her mother Chana Leah passively accepted her hard life in a lonely village. Ida was the oldest child, whose most enjoyable memories are of the exciting Zionist youth organization.*

Ida's family had lived in the Ivye region of Byelorussia as long as anyone could remember. Ida's parents got married through a *shidach*, an arranged marriage set up by a relative or a matchmaker. Her mother, Chanah Leah Lipchin (usually called Leah), did not have the freedom, choices, or romantic visions that we take for granted today. When they wed, Chaim Kozlowski was 28 years old and already considered an "old bachelor". Twenty-year-old Leah did not relish the idea of being the only Jewish woman in tiny and isolated Mishukovitz, over 40 miles from her family in desirable Karelich. However, Leah's father liked Chaim, who was honest, religious, and hard working, and that was what mattered. Respecting her father's wishes, Leah married Chaim and moved to Mishukovitz.

Leah was a very quiet, unassuming, and pious woman, who passively accepted her hard life. She grew up in the *shtetl* of Karelich (Karelichi or Korelicz), near the important city of Novogrudek. Leah's days in Mishukovitz were filled with constant work, taking care of the children, home, livestock, and plot of land. Leah traveled to Ivye once a week to buy necessities, as Mishukovitz had no real stores. Ida's grandmother, who lived with them, would try to re-sell some of these goods to the locals in Mishukovitz. Ida remembers the goods her *bubbee* offered for sale: bagels, pumpkin seeds, candies, and herring. Such entrepreneurship was common in the villages, where people would try to sell whatever they could from their homes, without producing much income. They tried to sell mostly small goods such as foods, pencils, pins, paper, and fruits. Of Leah's three siblings, only her sister Neche survived the war, although she lost three children to the Nazis. Neche's daughters Chaya (now Yudovitch) and Malka (now Bulkostein) survived, and now live in Israel with their large families.

Chaim Kozlowski was a physically strong man, who worked very hard as a blacksmith. Following the now-familiar pattern, an ancestor changed the family surname from Leibman to Kozlowski. Kozlowski is a very common Polish name, well suited to help evade the Czar's selective and fatal draft of Jewish boys. Chaim had his nose purposefully broken while still a teenager, also to avoid Russia's endless wartime conscription. True to tradition, almost all the men in the Kozlowski family were blacksmiths, most working in the small *dorfs* in the area. Chaim's father Yosef, his grandfather, and all his brothers except his half-brother David (*tante* Jennie's husband) were blacksmiths. Chaim's half-siblings from his father's first wife Rachel were: David, Toby Rose Cohen (from Ellenville NY); Leib, and Yitzhak (cousin Joe Kazlow's father, the grandfather of Ira and Arlene). From his father's second wife, Chaim's mother Sarah Goldsmith, Chaim had three other siblings: his sisters Chanah, Rifka, and Rose ('aunt Rose from Albany' NY). The family received packages of clothing and other goods from other relatives in America, like Ida's great uncle Eliyahu, who lived in Cleveland Ohio.



The *dorfs* were so small that they barely needed one smithy each, and even so, blacksmiths scarcely eked out a living. Being a blacksmith was demanding physical work. Chaim forged ironware for his neighbor's farms, wagons, homes, or trades, and goods to sell at the market. In warm weather, iron bands for the wooden wagon wheels were in demand, and in the winter metal runners for sleds were needed. Early each Wednesday morning, Chaim loaded up a canvas sack with iron goods he made in his shop, and carried this heavy load on his back for six miles, to the Ivye market square. Sometimes, a wagon would pass by and give him a ride. In the square, he joined dozens of other merchants. He spread out the knives, scythes, axes, hammers, horseshoes, and other iron objects, trying to sell his wares. In the evening, he walked the six miles back to his home, hopefully with a lighter load. In his later years in the U.S., Chaim worked in an iron forging shop.

Ida was the oldest of four children, all of whom were born and raised in tiny Mishukovitz. The children were all born in the family's home, assisted by a local woman experienced at helping deliver babies; she was not a trained mid-wife. Ida's three siblings were Joseph (born in 1924), Marcia (born in 1927), and Gloria (born in 1932). Chaya was named after her maternal grandmother, Chaya Lipchin, the first wife of Aaron Lipchin. After Chaya died, Aaron married a very warmhearted woman named Bella, but they were not able to have any more children.

Interestingly, Ida's adventuresome grandfather Aaron Lipchin had emigrated to the U.S. in 1905 to avoid the Czar's draft during the disastrous Russo-Japanese War. This was a matter of survival, for Jewish soldiers were immediately sent to the front of the battle lines, to die in this futile Czarist adventure. He returned to his family after the war, but later again came to the U.S. a second time, still seeking a better life. Ultimately he gave up on America, deciding that America was a "*goyishe*" (Christian) land in which a devout Jew could not live. He returned to Europe, and was eventually killed in the Novogrudek ghetto annihilation.

The Kozlowski home was on a plot of land that included space for a garden and livestock. The house had several rooms, similar to Rubin's home. The house did not have any electricity or plumbing, and the outhouse was in the back yard. A large fireplace was used for heating and cooking. Ida shared a bed with her *bubbee*, Chaim's widowed mother Sara Doba Kozlowski. When Ida went away to school, her sister Marcia liked to sleep with her affectionate *bubbee* Sara. The whole family shared two towels at most for everyday hand washing. Baths were taken once a week in large wooden tubs in which hot water was prepared by pouring boiling water into a tub of cold water. Of course, Ivye also had traditional bathhouses and a *mikveh*, the Jewish ritual immersion pool. Ida sometimes accompanied her mother to the *mikveh* and got a real and luxurious bath, as women bathed and washed totally in a true bathtub before entering the crystal-clear *mikveh*. Ida does not remember any luxuries or extravagances in the home. Some of the more memorable objects were a chiming wall clock, a large mirror, and a copper samovar. Oh yes, there was a venerable treadle-powered Singer sewing machine, used to make clothing and furnishings for the family, and articles to sell.

From a very young age, Ida had many chores, like churning butter, taking care of the garden, and feeding and tending to the chickens and cows. She also had to



bring water from a nearby well. In the summertime, cold water was available from a deeper well about two blocks away. In the springtime, the house was thoroughly cleaned for Passover, sometimes even re-painted. At that time, the furniture was brought out, and bedbugs were evicted by throwing boiling water onto the straw-filled bedding. As the oldest child, Ida also helped her mother raise her siblings. Leah had many ailments during most of her life, and Leah depended on her oldest daughter Ida ever since Ida was a young girl.

The Kozlowski family was relatively poor, whether they thought about it or not, and many of the meals consisted largely of potato dishes. Potato *latkes* (pancakes) were a favorite, especially for breakfast. Eggs and milk were obtained from the family's chickens and cows. The Friday evening *Erev Shabbos* meal was always more festive than other meals, with the traditional white tablecloth, *Shabbos* candles, wine, and homemade *challah*. The closest *schul* was in the nearby *dorf* of Mikalaiveh, over a one-hour walk, and so Chaim mostly prayed at home, three times a day. The whole family went to *schul* on holidays, and on some *Erev Shabbos* evenings or Saturday mornings.

Mishukovitz was not an ideal place for a Jewish family, children, or anybody with an interest in the world beyond. Ida's most enjoyable memories of her young years were the good times she had in the Betar Zionist youth organization. Most of the Jewish teenagers belonged to this or other Zionist groups, and the activities, festivities, holiday celebrations, and outings made life interesting in an otherwise stifling environment. Besides school and Betar activities, Ida learned how to sew clothing from a cousin's sister, a professional dressmaker. Ida disliked life in this tiny, isolated, and backward *dorf*, which had no other Jewish families and in which she had no real friends. The Gentile girls were never more than acquaintances. The most negative childhood memories were of constantly living away from home with distant relatives, because Mishukovitz had no schools, Jewish or other.

Starting at age five, Ida was sent to the closest *cheder* in the nearby *dorf* of Mikalaiveh. Here she lived with the schoolteacher's family, who also had a second job as a *shochet*. This school was 'only' two miles from her home, so she was able to walk home every Friday afternoon before Shabbat. By the third grade, her parents sent her to the Hebrew school in Karelich, about 40 miles away, where her grandfather and the Lipchin family lived. When her younger brother Joe started school, she and Joe played musical chairs, switching schools and living accommodations periodically. The relative poverty of the relatives with whom they lived, as well as the small living space available in their small homes, meant that there was only room for one of the Kozlowski children at a time with any relative. In the fourth grade, Ida went to school in Ivye while her brother Joe went to Karelich, where he lived with their grandfather.

The *shtetl* of Ivye had an elementary school that had Jewish children, but it was six miles from Mishukovitz, a two-hour walk. In Ivye, Ida therefore lived with her aunt Rifka Baksht during the school week, a fateful arrangement that would affect her



entire life, as Reuven Segalowicz was also a boarder in this house. Each Friday afternoon Chaya walked six miles to be home with her family for *Shabbos*, and each Sunday she walked back to her aunt's house for the next week's school. All the Kozlowski children had similar school journeys. The children often carried food with them as they trekked to their relatives' homes, as the families were too poor to easily feed additional children. This nomadic school life was a typical lifestyle back then, when children from small villages had to live with distant relatives in order to go to schools that were miles from their homes. Ida finished her elementary schooling in Ivye, and was consistently at the top of her class in all subjects. Ida has retained a love of learning, self-improvement, reading, and study all her life, true to Jewish teaching and values, and has instilled these values in her children.

When she was ten, Ida met Rubin Segalowicz. Maybe fate brought both of them to Ivye from different towns. Ida's aunt Rivka Baksht and her husband rented out a small room in their home to Rubin's widowed grandmother Kuneh Bloch, which she shared with Rubin while he went to school in Ivye. Rubin and Ida soon became inseparable friends. He would bring her presents, usually on Fridays as *Shabbos* gifts. The types of presents were interesting by today's standards. He brought bags of nuts or sunflower seeds, or sometimes pins for her hair. Ida was so bashful that she would not wear the pins, since they might attract attention as gifts from a 'boyfriend'. Rubin was also creative and handy with tools even then, and made puppets and dolls for Ida, Marcia, and toddler Gloria. Rubin would also help Marcia with her homework—Ida did not need any help with her homework. They both joined and were active in 'Betar', the Zionist youth organization, and have retained a devotion to Zionism spanning their entire lives.

The Kozlowski family turned out to be the only Jewish family from the entire Ivye region to survive the war intact—father, mother, and all children. Ida's family was also the only one of the Kozlowski and Lipchin families to survive intact. Most of Ida's aunts, uncles, and cousins living in Europe, and her grandparents, were killed. Altogether, Ida lost over 36 close relatives to the Nazis: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and first cousins. Five entire families were wiped out—parents and children.



## RUSSIAN OCCUPATION

*The strong Soviet army was viewed as a powerful shield against Hitler's fanatic anti-Semitism. Under Russian rule, Rubin was able to go back to his family's home, and Ida was able to pursue a higher education. Ida studied nursing, hoping to eventually become a doctor.*

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Western Poland while Russia invaded Eastern Poland. This joint action was part of Stalin's pact with Hitler. Communist Russia looked upon this as a 'liberation' of their Ukrainian and Byelorussian brothers, using the rationale that it was merely regaining territories taken from her in 1917-1918. Russia gained 75,000 square miles and 128 million people.

The Nazi invasion of Poland was barefaced hunger for more territory and domination of its neighbors, for more 'living room' (*'lebensraum'*) for the Germans. In Western Poland, the superior German Army overwhelmed the Polish army, which barely offered any resistance. The Polish weapons and equipment were inferior and obsolete, and they were heavily outnumbered. Contrary to popular myth, the Poles did not attack German tanks with horse-mounted troops. However, Poland's defenses included barbed wire, trenches, and set gun emplacements strung along a border with no natural geographic barriers. This was an unworkable 20-year-old strategy that did not even work in World War 1. The end-result was inevitable. Panzer divisions penetrated rapidly and deeply into Poland, using new tactics that would later be called *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war). The Polish government held up for five days, and then fled to London.

In the western part of Poland, the anti-Semitic Nazi intentions could be seen from the very first. On the Friday following the German invasion, all synagogues in Western Poland were overflowing with Jews already praying for their lives. Although the conclusion, the 'Final Solution', was not yet obvious, Germany had promulgated anti-Semitic laws and persecution for the past six years. The German trains carrying the invading troops had crude caricatures of hook-nosed old men painted on them, with the words "We're going to Poland to thrash the Jews" painted below the pictures.

On the Yom Kippur of September 1939 following the invasion, Nazis broke into the crowded synagogues and started singing their anti-Semitic songs. Jews were forced to listen, and those that tried to leave were shot. When the captive Jews in the synagogue had to relieve themselves, they were made to do it against the walls of the building. They then had to wipe the walls clean of their excrement with their *tallitim* (prayer shawls), curtains from the Holy Ark, pages from their *siddurim* (Holy Prayer Books), and embroidered Torah covers. The beards of Rabbis and religious Jews were burned, sliced, sawed, ripped, and shredded off their faces in public, along with pieces of flesh. Rabbis were ordered to sweep the streets on this Holy Day, and then killed. Old and weak Jews were harnessed to garbage carts and made to drag them through the streets while other Jews were ordered to load refuse onto the carts. While some Nazis beat Jews, others proudly took photographs and motion pictures to send home. The Gentiles looked on, or cheered the Germans.



Jews from western Poland who escaped to the east started telling of the Nazi terrors. Rubin's older sister Sonia and her husband, Joseph Starkman, were living near Warsaw in western Poland, in Joe's hometown of Kielce, and they fled east to Ivenets. The stories of organized mass killings were hard for the still-naïve Jews of Ivenets to believe; no one could be so barbaric—the stories were considered exaggerations. For hundreds of centuries Jews had endured persecution, restrictions, taxation, ghettos, re-settlement, forced emigration, and sporadic pogroms. The systematic mass murder of thousands of Jews was not something that could be happening in the middle of the civilized 20<sup>th</sup> century. The hardships of every day life seemed more real than these tales.

In Eastern Poland, the Poles did not resist the Russians either. There were few battles between Russian and Polish troops. Russia just walked in and took over, and the occupied areas soon “applied” to become Soviet Republics of the USSR. Immediately afterwards, the Communist infrastructure was put into place. Street names were changed to honor Stalin and Lenin. To the benefit of some Jews with their relatively high education levels, and others with Communist leanings, many now found favorable positions in government services and previously restricted professions, including the Russian secret police.

Some of the Russian changes were welcome, such as new hospitals and schools. On the negative side, thousands of Jews lost their livelihood as they were forced to leave their homes and businesses and work in the newly centralized industries. Business owners were sent to Siberian labor camps for ‘exploiting the proletariat’, even if they were decent employers. By a perverse twist of fate, many Jews sent to Siberia survived the war, since they were removed from Hitler's reach. Russia outlawed all ethnic and religious organizations, and Hebrew schools were transformed into Yiddish-speaking Communist academies with no religious programs. Teachers were soon pressured to replace Yiddish with Russian. No university courses were taught in Yiddish, making it almost impossible for Jews to enter the university unless they studied Russian, thereby destroying any rationale for Yiddish-language courses in the first place. Hebrew was the only language formally outlawed by the Communists, banned outright as a Zionistic language.

Overall, Russian policies towards Jews were contradictory and paradoxical. Russia did not promote official or state-sanctioned anti-Semitism, and had many Jews in important positions in government and in the military. Yet, anti-Jewish religious restrictions and ingrained historic anti-Semitic sentiments were widespread. Russia barred Zionism as a political movement, officially stating it challenged Soviet sovereignty. The Russians arrested Zionist leaders as political enemies, sending thousands to Siberia. They shut Jewish social centers, and arrested non-Zionist as well as Zionist Jewish leaders as potential enemies. Zionist groups burned their membership rosters to protect their members, and either disbanded or went underground. Many idealistic Jews who previously had Communist sympathies became disillusioned by the anti-Jewish policies of Russia, and realized that Communism was not what it was expected to be. Russia somewhat relaxed these anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist policies after it later went to war against Hitler and needed all the unity it could get, but re-instituted them as soon as the war was over.



With Russian occupation of the eastern half of Poland and the neighboring Baltic States, Jews in these areas came under more anti-Semitic pressure than before from the Gentile population, and their everyday lives deteriorated rapidly. In addition to Russia's anti-Jewish policies, Jews in the occupied areas now had to deal with neighbors who viewed them in a new and not beneficial light. Since some local Jews were known to have had Communistic leanings even before Russian occupation, the Poles now viewed the entire Jewish community as a base for immediate or potential traitors. The Poles associated these sometimes-open sympathies with disloyalty to Poland, if not outright collaboration with the occupying power, and grouped all Jews into this category. Another factor was the religion of the occupying soldiers. Many Russian military units had significant numbers of Jews in them; some as many as 20% Jews. Therefore, all of a sudden, Jewish soldiers were dictating orders to Poles, an unwelcome turn of events.

Most non-Communist Jews were more than happy with the Russian occupation of Poland for very practical and non-political terms, as the alternative was conquest by Germany. The strong Soviet military was viewed as a powerful shield against Hitler's fanaticism. In addition, the whole world knew that there were irreconcilable hostilities between the ideologies of Fascism and Communism. Jews decided that of the two, Communism was the least repressive alternative. However, siding with the exploitive Communists infuriated the nationalists. So, for various reasons, the ready Jewish acceptance of the Soviet occupation, if not blatant happiness, led to even more anti-Semitic acts and widespread resentment against the 'Communist Jews'. The Jews were caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place."

In Ivenets, many changes affected life in various ways, some for the worse, and some for the better. The Russians immediately instituted their repressive Communist social and political structure. Religious practice and Zionist activities were immediately outlawed, and Hebrew could not be spoken anywhere. Russian became the official language. Coincidentally, the Byelorussian language is close to Russian, which made it easier to learn the Russian system. In some respects, the Russian occupation was somewhat benevolent. All businesses had to form or become part of collectives, from which the government of course collected taxes. In the Russian centralized collective state-managed work and union system, everyone was paid a living wage, even if you did not really have meaningful work to do. On the other hand, everyone was expected to work, and the Russian saying was "Whoever does not work does not eat." Non-working "parasites", including business owners and landlords, were sent to Siberian labor prisons. Under Russian rule, the formerly poor fared somewhat better, and the formerly rich suffered immensely.

One immediate impact was that Rubin was now working for the Soviet government, but making even less money than before. However, an unexpected benefit was that Rubin was now free to move back to Ivenets as a painter, even though there was no need for additional painters in that town. Under the new Russian pay system, Rubin made 600 rubles a month. For this amount, one could purchase one kilogram of butter on the black market, just over two pounds. There was no price for butter in the legal centralized state-run markets, since butter was not available there at all. At least, though, Rubin could now be with his family.



Rubin was also drafted into the Russian Army, as were all eligible men in the occupied territories. However, he received a deferment for being his family's sole provider and was placed in the reserves. He completed the mandatory reserve military training, attending drills and training on Sundays, his day off from work. He learned to handle weapons—rifles, pistols, and grenades—and to manufacture, handle, place, and detonate explosives, which was to become invaluable training. The Russian Army welcomed Jews, knowing they had good motivation to fight the Nazis. Despite the existence of anti-Semites in the Red Army, the Russian Command prohibited overt anti-Semitism in its ranks, and the Red Army had many Jewish soldiers and officers.

With the wave of new Communist educational opportunities, Ida was given a chance to pursue higher education, an opportunity she gladly welcomed. There was no discrimination between sexes for most professions, and women doctors, engineers, factory workers, and administrators were all common in Russia. The choices she was given depended on Russia's wartime and political needs at that time, and her options were either a teacher's college or nursing school. The teacher's college did not require an entrance test, but upon graduation, teachers were expected to go wherever sent, most likely to small remote villages where children were traveling long distances to school. This was not an appealing option, as Ida did not even like her own isolated village. Ida took the nursing school test and did exceedingly well, even better than many applicants who had completed 'gymnasium' (high school) courses. For her nursing studies 17-year old Ida left home once again, this time for the city of Slonim, living with her mother's older brother, her uncle Moshe. Slonim was a 'large city' of over 30,000 people with several universities; it even had some stone and masonry buildings. She was on her way to becoming a nurse, and anticipated fulfilling her dream of becoming a doctor.

By the age of 19, Ida was nearly finished with her studies at nursing school. Since she was an excellent student and at the top in her class, she was frequently awarded prizes for her grades, including special monetary awards, as was customary in the Russian school system. She also received regular monthly stipends, sort of a fellowship, meant to encourage continued studies and reduce the need for good students to drop out of school to work for their family's livelihood. Like many others, Ida joined the Communist Youth League, the Komsomol, to enjoy better privileges and to win acceptance by the Russian teachers. Although the initial purpose of the Komsomol was to foster interest in revolutionary Communism in young people, after the Russian revolution its purpose changed to engage its members in health activities, education, publishing, and industrial projects. In any case, Ida was not fooled by the attractions of Communism, but was being practical. Membership in the Komsomol was almost a prerequisite for acceptance to universities, as well as a competitive advantage for scholarships, employment, and government positions. Medical school was almost within reach, but the Nazi invasion quickly put an end to all such dreams and plans.



## NAZI INVASION

*The Germans immediately started their programs of mass murder and implementation of the Final Solution in Belarus. The local Christian population often cheered and assisted the Nazis. Ida remembers clearly: "The death I saw in one day most people would not see in a lifetime."*

The Hitler-Stalin pact lasted less than two years, during which Hitler planned the attack on his 'ally'. On the morning of Sunday June 22, 1941, Hitler invaded Russia with a surprise attack on the territories of Poland and the Baltic States that he had previously relinquished to the USSR. The Russian Army was caught completely off guard by the sudden massive onslaught, Germany's new *Blitzkrieg* war tactic. Germany attacked rapidly from many directions, on the ground and from the air. Bombs and artillery shells fell continuously on every major town in Eastern Poland and the bordering regions. Germany used incendiary bombs on the larger cities, burning entire areas. German airplanes parachuted small one-man tanks that were able to travel much faster than large heavy tanks. Rubin recalls these tanks moving so fast that they were a blur. German troops and heavy artillery immediately followed these fast tanks. (It is possible that the one-man tanks were the fast, lightweight training tanks that the Germans used in the early days of the war in addition to the main battle tanks, which were in short supply at that time.)

The Russian garrisons that had appeared so strong scattered and retreated. There was never any good explanation for the rapid collapse of the Russian Army. It is hard to conceive what Russia's commanders were thinking, since Germany had massed so many troops and war material on the border. Some people are convinced that Russian generals defected to Germany. It is true that Russian troops were spread thin in the newly occupied areas, and, Russia had many new and untrained recruits. In any case Russia's military strategists and politicians totally misunderstood Hitler, and did not think that even a madman would risk opening a second front, no matter what his later plans might have been. Resisting Russian troops were killed or captured. Many Russian soldiers shed their uniforms, buried their weapons, and fled to the forests. At the borders, Russian soldiers turned civilian refugees back, supposedly because Russia did not want to chance 'German spies' entering their country. Jews were turned back to face death.

The German invasion, Operation Barbarossa (Red Beard), was the biggest military operation in history. Germany massed over 180 divisions, 3.5 million men, along a 1,800-mile front. That is approximately the distance between New York and Las Vegas, more than two-thirds the length of the U.S. On the first day of the attack, Germany destroyed 800 Soviet aircraft at 60 airfields, and Nazi troops advanced 50 miles. Within a short time, the Nazis were 600 miles into Russia, approaching the gates of Moscow, and already planning to attack Stalingrad. German's military strategists planned to defeat Russia in six months, before the coldest months of winter set in. Early victories gave Germany sufficient overconfidence that Hitler boasted in a radio speech that Russia would capitulate in eight weeks. However, within months, the Nazis encountered stiffening Russian resistance and perhaps the strongest ally the Russians had—the brutal Russian winter—half-jokingly called "General Winter".



Oil and grease froze in the German tanks and trucks, and the mechanized German Army had to hitch horses and men to their equipment to pull them out of the solidly frozen mud. Wounded soldiers died from frostbite, not from wounds. The Russians launched a counter offensive in the winter of 1942, driving west from Stalingrad, which saw the start-of-the-end for Germany. Operation Barbarossa would become Hitler's biggest and costliest mistake. It was also a tragic turning point for the Jews, as the Nazi killings escalated immediately upon their invasion of Russia. Captured documents show that Hitler thought that he would win the war by October 1941, and planned to conclusively 'deal with' all of Europe's Jews immediately afterwards. As the war turned against Germany, the killing of Jews intensified even further. It is amazing that even while fighting on two fronts and increasingly suffering defeats, Hitler put valuable resources towards butchering Jews who were no threat to him.

In June of 1941, however, the Germans appeared unstoppable, bombing all significant towns and cities, including Ivye and Ivenets. By the second day, German troops were well into the regions of Belarus in which Rubin and Ida lived, and the air was filled with the dreaded sound of German jackboots marching down the streets. The *Wehrmacht* was already nearly finished fighting in this region. Immediately, the swastika was on the flag on every building in the newly occupied areas. The Nazi plan was set in motion with customary German efficiency, and all Jews now knew that horrors were imminent. New edicts, curfews, quotas, food rationing, and other restrictions were put into place within days. Germany renamed towns and streets—Poland's Lodz became Litzmannstadt, and Brivibas (Liberty) Street in Latvia's capital of Riga became Adolf-Hitler-Strasse. At the Russian border, German soldiers dressed themselves in Russian uniforms, and as fleeing Jews approached what might be sanctuary, these Nazis captured and killed them.

The Germans immediately started their programs of mass murder, as if this was their first priority. By this time, the Nazis felt none of the constraints they felt during their earlier persecution in Western Europe. Systematic large-scale killing of Jews started within hours of the German invasion, and continued for 4 years. The local non-Germans assisted in the killings, which greatly encouraged the Nazis. The worst offenders in terms of nationalities that aided and collaborated with the Nazis were the Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Latvians, who formed murderous gangs even without German encouragement. Rubin and Ida did not routinely encounter all of these various nationalities in their towns of Ivye and Ivenets, but these 'partisans' or 'auxiliary police' gangs roamed these regions with the Nazis. Many Christians remained neutral, neither helping the killers nor offering aid to the victims, but such neutrality helped the killers, never the victims. A small percentage of decent non-German Gentiles assisted the Jews out of conscience or sympathy, but the gross indifference and silence of the majority of Gentiles encouraged the Germans to accelerate their killings, as did wartime setbacks and defeats.

Contrary to occasional misuse, Nazi 'Storm Troopers' were not involved in these invasions and mass murders in Eastern Europe, or in the ghettos or concentration camps. The Storm Troopers, or Brown Shirts, were the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, assault division), originally organized as the armed military branch of the Nazi party. The Nazi 'political party' had medical, engineering, communications, and astoundingly,



armed military divisions. The unimaginable parallel in the U.S. would be if the Democratic Party had its own armed and uniformed military branch, answering only to the party head. The SA was initially formed to protect Nazi meetings from attacks by others, but soon became a private attack army, used to intimidate and even kill opponents. Its members included the unemployed, street gangs, drunks, and other thugs. The only activity of 'Storm Troopers' in Eastern Europe was in the much earlier 'invasion' of Austria, which was really a 'welcome home' party, as the cheering Austrians mostly hugged the Nazi 'invaders'. The Storm Troopers also initiated the *Kristallnacht* horrors, burning hundreds of synagogues and Jewish establishments in Germany and Austria.

During their peak, Storm Troopers literally went door-to-door seeking out Hitler's opponents. Their numbers grew to almost four million, several times the size of the German Army at that time. The ambitious SA leadership hoped to absorb the entire German military, and got disillusioned with Hitler when they did not receive their due rewards. At the same time, Hitler's newly rising military had no use for the SA. The 'elite' SS considered the Storm Troopers a bunch of low-life hoodlums and bums, which they were, and openly looked down upon the SA. The black-uniformed SS prided itself on being the most racially pure guard of the Third Reich. SS officers and their wives had to prove their racial purity back to the year 1700, and they had to have an 'Aryan' appearance. A maladjusted gravedigger or street sweeper who stood upright and whose grandparents were inbred peasants could become a member of the 'elite' SS, as well as a shining representative of the 'master race'. Hitler eliminated the SA and other opposition leaders after 1934, during the famous 'Night of the Long Knives', and the 'Storm Troopers' ceased to function.

After the German Army moved on, the next group of Germans in Ivye was the 'gendarmes', part of the new National Police or 'Order Police', maybe equivalent to our State Troopers. These policemen were mostly too old for combat duty, although they participated in mass killings and partisan 'hunts' when they were occasionally put under army command. Ida believes that these 'gendarmes' were likely World War 1 veterans because of their age and military manners. Unlike the young SS men who soon followed, they enforced German rules but were not overtly anti-Semitic. The Order Police in the larger cities were not as kind as the *gendarmes* in Ivye apparently were. Larger cities also had other German police forces, including military police, special services, criminal police, and of course the Gestapo. The *gendarmes* disappeared from Ivye one night, replaced by the special SS killing squads. Within days, these Nazis started their *Aktionen*. *Aktionen* were systematic, coordinated terror assaults aimed at exterminating the entire Jewish population of a town or region. *Aktionen* were carried out by the mobile killing groups, the *Einsatzgruppen* and their *Einsatzkommando* sub-squads, whose job was to move from town to town, killing all the Jews they could find.

The Nazis thus started their implementation of the "Final Solution" in Belarus. In the course of a few months, a large part of the Jewish population in these regions was exterminated. The remaining Jews were imprisoned in ghettos, not yet knowing or believing that their turn was already on the Nazi death schedule. By the time the war ended, every Jewish ghetto in Belarus was liquidated.



## The Killing Squads

*The men in these killing units were not soldiers; just sadistic killers who rarely faced armed opponents. These butchers and their cronies personally killed over one-and-a-half million unarmed and innocent people, largely with firearms, and dumped their bodies into mass graves. The only mercy these killers dispensed was quick death vs. cruel death.*

The official name of the *Einsatzgruppen* killing squads can be translated as 'Operational Squads of the Security Service and Security Police'. Commonly known as 'Action Groups', they reported directly to Hitler through Heinrich Himmler, and were part of the SS forces. SS stood for *schutzstaffen*, 'protection or state security' forces, and their initial mission was to protect Nazi leaders. The *Einsatzgruppen* were distinct and separate paramilitary units within the SS, selected and trained to organize and execute the brutal acts that went beyond those of the *Wehrmacht*, the regular German Army. Although the *Wehrmacht* performed more than its share of atrocities in the course of the war, especially on the Eastern front, its primary purpose was to fight enemy soldiers, not to routinely and specifically organize killings and mass murder of civilians. The *Einsatzgruppen* did not purposefully engage enemy soldiers. Their precise operational methods were given to them in special training courses. Their mission was to 'eliminate Jews and Communists' (and Gypsies where they were found) and to implement the "Final Solution to the Jewish question". Hitler was kept personally informed of their daily 'progress', which left a paper trail of their genocidal activities, including numbers of people killed and official photographs of the mass killings.

Each member of these squads had to kill at least one Jew in front of witnesses. The intent was to assure that every soldier of the *Einsatzgruppen* took part in these criminal acts, so that in case Germany lost the war none of these men could claim that they did not participate in the killings. The Germans obviously knew that what these 'soldiers' were doing was criminal, even by harsh wartime standards, and wanted total complicity in their crimes. This 'security organization' was the only government-sanctioned agency in modern history established solely for the purpose of conducting massive civilian-killing operations. At the end of their day's 'work', after a day of shooting thousands of Jews, these beasts gathered for an evening of celebratory drink and banquets, undeterred by the nature of their 'work'.

The *Einsatzgruppen* were no doubt among the most ruthless, contemptible and despised of the Nazi criminals. They were comparable to the SS *Totenkopf* units (Death's Head units; *toten* means death, *kopf* is head), with the fear-provoking skull and crossbones insignia on their caps and uniforms. The infamous Death's Head units guarded and operated the concentration camps, terrified and killed their defenseless prey, and were ultimately responsible for operation of the gas chambers. The fact that most of the Death's Head soldiers volunteered for the duty of guarding concentration camps tells us something about their personalities. On the occasions that the Death's Head units were assigned to contact partisans, it was only to commit atrocities against them. These two groups had one common objective: persecute and kill defenseless Jews and other perceived civilian enemies, such as priests and Gypsies.



The *Einsatzgruppen* numbered no more than 3,500 men, specially selected from other Nazi organizations. The *Einsatzgruppen* consisted of four geographically based *Einsatzkommando* squads of 600 to 1,000 men each. Their task was to follow on the heels of the advancing German Army and trap all Jewish population centers before they could organize or resist. These squads were not staffed sufficiently to perform all the killings in the numerous towns they occupied, even with the assistance of the *Wehrmacht*. Therefore, the *Einsatzgruppen* were trained to organize non-German 'partisans', collaborators, "policemen", and similar gangs to assist them. Some survivors believe that there would not have been a Holocaust without the participation of the local Nazi "helpers." As encouragement to the non-Germans to participate in the killings and persecution, the Nazis distributed Jewish belongings and homes to their collaborators. There were always sufficient anti-Semites to form large contingents of Jew-killing mobs, many formed on their own accord. In some cases, the Nazis recorded their surprise at how brutal and sadistic the local peasants were towards their former neighbors. It is estimated that in Latvia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine over 300,000 local 'auxiliary forces' participated with the killing squad *kommandos*, a ratio of nearly 100-to-1. After the war, and especially after the break-up of the Soviet Union, these republics minimized how many of their citizens assisted the Nazis in these killings, and insisted that whatever killing witnesses attested to, their citizens were forced to do at gunpoint.

In every single town the *Einsatzkommandos* occupied there were new rules, violence, and random and organized killings. In towns that appeared tranquil, it was either because the *Einsatzkommandos* were busy elsewhere, or were occupied digging the pits soon to be used as the first mass graves. Standard war gear for these units included shovels! The high-level commanders were on a tight schedule, giving themselves 2 or 3 days in each town to organize and complete each round of killings. In many places, the victims themselves were made to dig their own graves. Deportations or mass killings always followed the first *Aktionen*. The Germans even had a special word for the mass killings targeting only Jews: *Judenaktion*.

The killing method the *Einsatzkommando* squads employed for their *Aktionen* was to shoot their victims beside or in pits, trenches, or ravines. Commanders carefully selected the sites. Mostly, the *Einsatzkommandos* did not do the actual killing, which was performed by local 'volunteers' using rifles, pistols, and machine guns. The shootings at close quarters produced terrible wounds, splattering blood and shattered body parts all around. If the ground was wet or water seeped into the pit, a deeply dyed red pool soon formed from the copious bleeding. The men assigned to do the shooting were given unlimited liquor to drink in anticipation of the psychological effect the killing of women and children might have on them. In fact, though, even heavy drinking could not suppress the disgust and repulsion of what they were doing. The *Einsatzkommandos* and their henchmen found the shooting and disposal operations laborious, "messy", and offensive, even if most of them were heavily drunk at the time. The killers sometimes walked on the moving bodies of their victims as they dispatched the wounded. Many of the killers could not sleep for days after committing or just watching these grisly acts. Eventually, gas chambers eliminated the need for the killers to watch their victims die. Looking at the already-dead gassed victims was obviously bearable.



The Nazis looked for other more “impersonal” killing methods, to make the lives of the murders more bearable. The *Einsatzkommandos* were the ones who tried the infamous gas suffocation vans. These vans were designed by the Reich’s Technical Department, which developed the hermetically sealed, metal-lined vans which piped carbon monoxide exhaust gases back into the rear cabin. The dead victims were pulled out of these vans with gaping, distorted faces, covered with excrement. The *Einsatzkommandos* then complained that watching Jews empty the vans of the 130 disfigured corpses was similarly horrible and disturbing, and an “unnecessary mental strain”. The gas vans were too slow anyway, taking almost 30 minutes per ‘batch.’ The impersonal act of gassing the unseen victims and hearing their screams as they died such a horrible death was apparently NOT a mental strain, as evidenced by the testimony of a gas van driver: “I myself never shot a single Jew; I only gassed them.” One regional commander experimented with explosives, testing this method on mentally ill Jews. The results were not satisfactory, as the killing rate was neither predictable nor complete, and too many maimed victims had to be killed by either a second explosive charge or shooting. The Germans went back to shooting their victims, and of course to developing their gas chambers and crematoria.

The Nazi brutes had many inspired variations of their killing methods. Children were yanked up by their hair, and then shot through the head. One commander recorded that this was too sadistic—that children should be shot where they stood. Experienced killers tossed children in the air to shoot them, to avoid the bullets ricocheting after passing through the small bodies. Children’s heads were bashed in by swinging them against stones or trees, or they were stabbed with bayonets. To save bullets, children were killed by especially cruel methods—thrown into the pits alive, smothered to death by the bodies and dirt above them. In the post-war trials, some Nazi soldiers defended their actions, stating that they ‘acted humanely’ if they shot children to death so they would not have to suffocate slowly under growing piles of bodies. Parents often asked that they be killed before their children, so they would not have to see their children die. This was only an invitation to kill the children first. Other Nazi officers stated, in their ludicrous defense, that they ordered their men to treat Jews humanely by ‘only killing them’—as if the acts of mutilation or torture were so heartless compared to ‘just killing’. No effort was made to hide the mass graves until late in the war, when the prospect of defeat became evident. At that point, the Germans tried to conceal their barbarity by having Jewish prisoners dig up the graves to dispose of the evidence, most often by burning the decomposing bodies. The Jewish witnesses were then killed.

The *Einsatzgruppen* soon perfected their persecution and killing methods, using ‘standardized’ procedures. For this reason, the stories of so many towns in Eastern Europe sound chillingly similar, with a common routine, as follows:

- The *Wehrmacht* first rapidly captured or chased away the defending army.
- Sometimes military ‘order police’ moved in to replace the German soldiers.
- Local thugs were encouraged to beat, rob, humiliate, or kill Jews.
- The *Einsatzgruppen* followed within days, starting their terror campaign.
- Jews from the town and surrounding villages were forced into one small section of the *shtetl* to make the Nazi’s work easier.



- Jewish armbands and patches became mandatory, details varying by town.
- Non-German thugs and collaborators were organized into 'police' units.
- The *Einsatzgruppen* fabricated excuses for a retribution killing, "a Provocation", in which 'only' several hundred Jews were executed.
- Local non-Germans were always involved in selecting the victims.
- The first victims were always rabbis, teachers, intellectuals, and town leaders.
- The selected Jews were marched or driven to pits not far from their town, beaten, flogged, and brutalized along the way.
- The victims were made to undress. In addition to the humiliation, the practical Germans re-cycled the clothes to ethnic Germans. (Some Germans complained that the clothes they were given "still had Jewish blood on them".)
- The victims were shot to death. Lucky victims died quickly.
- The surviving Jews were packed into an intolerable ghetto.
- The Nazis set up the Jewish Council, the *Judenrat* to carry out their decrees. The *Judenrat* helped confiscate valuables in a set order: first weapons; then cars, radios and bicycles; then money and jewelry.
- A round of larger mass killing was carried out, sometimes thousands a day.
- The bodies were left in pits, often with dirt thrown over the pile of bodies.
- Local citizens or Germans confiscated all remaining property and businesses.
- Jews in the ghetto were starved, sent to slave labor camps, or "resettled". Resettlement' was a one-way journey to concentration or death camps.
- Through the *Judenrat*, the Nazis extorted any remaining valuables as ransom for safety or return of "resettled" Jews—almost no one ever returned.
- The rest of the ghetto was eventually liquidated, mostly by shooting.
- The 'lucky' survivors were moved to other ghettos, labor camps, or worse.

There were some barbarous variations from these procedures, depending on the whims of the commander. In many towns, local peasants goaded on by the *Einsatzgruppen* locked hundreds of Jews into synagogues or barns and set the buildings ablaze. Members of the *Judenrat* were frequently shot either for not following orders to the letter, or just as a means of keeping the others in line. Locals often took the initiative themselves, and, even without Nazi encouragement, carried out 'Jew hunts' before the killings, and 'mop-up' operations afterwards. To save valuable bullets, the killers lined victims up closely so two people might be killed with a single bullet. Often this did not work, and the victim in the rear was only mortally wounded, and another bullet was required for this depraved game to end. In some cases, the Nazis put quicklime (calcium oxide) over the bodies to accelerate the decomposition of the bodies. In one location, they then pumped water on top of the pile of recently shot victims, many still alive. A caustic solution formed which chemically burned and almost dissolved human tissues. This sight was so horrible the Nazis stopped using this method. In Latvia, the Nazi commander created a method of packing more victims into the ditches. He ordered the Jews to lie face down, with their heads between the legs of those already shot, and then killed them there. He called his method "sardine packaging." Near Riga, "packers" were stationed in the killing pits, making sure victims lined up so they would fall in the grave head-to-toe. At this site, 13,000 people were killed in one day, a rate of nine people each minute.



The *Einsatzgruppen* carried out one other notably consistent malicious act. The dates they frequently chose for public hangings, mass killings, and other similar atrocities were Jewish holidays. Every Jewish holiday was a day of terror, torture, and death: Yom Kippur, Shavuot, Purim, Passover—no holiday was left untouched. Ilye and Ivenets had their share of holidays that became *Yahrzeit* days.

The complete list of holiday atrocities is too long to include here, but examples include:

- On Rosh Hashonah 1941, 23,000 Jews were murdered in Vinnitsa, Ukraine.
- Yom Kippur 1941 was especially deadly. 3,000 Jews were killed in Vilna. Nearly 1,000 Jews were murdered in Butrimonys, Lithuania, where crowds sat on benches for "a good view." Many other towns 'observed' that day similarly.
- 5,000 Jews were murdered in Minsk on Purim 1942.
- In the Catholic holy city of Czestochowa, Poland, over 100 Jewish doctors and their families were shot on Purim 1943.
- On Yom Kippur 1943, over 1,000 men and women in Birkenau concentration camp were proclaimed too sick to work and were gassed to death.

The commanders kept meticulous records of their operations, which they were required to both mail and radio to Berlin. In addition, Hitler requested visual records for his scrutiny, so photos were taken at the killing sites especially for him. The written 'Situation Reports' indicate the date, location; number of women, children, and men killed; the details of the few non-Jews (Gypsies, priests, etc.); the tallies, and the property stolen. Special notation was made if it was a Jewish holiday. Contrary to accepted wartime policies of sparing civilian women and children, Jewish women and children were specific targets, since the Nazis documented in writing that "they represented the future of European Jewry.....and must therefore be eliminated". The Germans also anticipated that if the children survived, they would grow up and try to exact revenge for the killing of their parents. Decrees were posted in some towns reading: "Pregnant Jewesses will be shot on sight."

The men in these mobile killing units were murderers, not really soldiers. They rarely faced armed opponents and never faced opposing armies. The killing squads were rarely used for anti-partisan activity, which was assigned to the *Wehrmacht* or to non-Germans. Many of the *Einsatzgruppen* commanders were well-educated men, who volunteered for their assignment because of its absence of personal danger, political ambition, and high rewards in the form of the unaccounted-for valuables that could be taken from the victims. A significant number of lawyers were in the commander ranks, perhaps explaining the perverse need for concocted excuses, the 'provocations', for many mass killings. It is interesting to note the somewhat incongruous background and fitting outcome of the commander of the 655-man '*Einsatzgruppen B*' squads in the Ilye and Ivenets area. Commander Arthur Nebe studied theology, and learned Hebrew during his schooling. He probably became a rabid anti-Semite because it would advance his career. He was involved with Germany's euthanasia program, and personally investigated the use of explosives to replace firearms for the mass killings, testing the explosives on mentally retarded Jews. He was later charged with treason during one of Hitler's internal purges, demoted to private, and hung by his fellow Nazis.



Non-official cameras were generally forbidden at the killing sites, but they were allowed in the towns and ghettos. Even at the killing sites, Germans craftily hid cameras, and 'souvenir photos' and movies started appearing in Nazi 'private collections'. Photos abound of Jewish mothers with their crying children, all naked, running, being shot, or lying deformed and broken in the pits. Photos show Nazis shooting point-blank into the heads of unclothed Jews, and of pregnant women being shot through the belly. Photos reveal pits overflowing with bloodied corpses piled up like bent twigs. Movie cameras recorded naked Jews being forced to jump into deep pits, then shot where they fell, and of children being thrown after them.

In some cases, Jews were able to escape the mass killing scenes because of the crowds, noise, confusion, and hysteria. Some just dove into the nearby forests. Some quick-thinking people fell into the death pits before they were shot, hoping that they would not be buried alive. Some of these people, and some wounded Jews, managed to crawl out of the heap of bodies in the burial graves and escaped, if they were not caught a second time. Enough people escaped and survived to record details of the mass killings and the subsequent events. In a few instances, Jews fought back at the last moment, attacking their armed guards with their bare hands. These valiant but futile attacks ended in more prolonged and cruel deaths than the quick bullet to the head. The goal in these instances was never escape or conquest, but rather demonstration of resistance. In some cases, Jews went so quietly to their deaths that the only noise was the sound of the shooting.

The *Einsatzgruppen* killing activities were particularly concentrated in the period between summer 1941 and winter 1942, between the Nazi invasion of Russia and the unexpectedly strong Russians resurgence. The initial wave of killings peaked between July 17 and August 31, 1941, the second six weeks of the Nazi invasion. During this period, several thousand Jews were killed each day, and over 100,000 were killed each month. The second wave of *Aktionen* began in the spring of 1942, and ended with the near-total annihilation of the Jews of western Belarus and Lithuania. During that period, the rise in partisan operations prompted the Nazis to increase their pace of extermination, as if time was running out for their most important mission, which was apparently not winning the war. The most infamous massacre was at the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev where 35,000 Jews were machine gunned to death in two days by Ukrainian butchers assisting the Germans.

The final tally for the *Einsatzkommandos* was one-and-a-half million people killed, with the majority murdered in an 18-month period beginning in 1941. These butchers used firearms to kill one-quarter of the 6-million Jews the Nazis exterminated. Nearly 4-million more died in the death camps. Later in the war, Himmler gave orders that the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* were to be obliterated. He organized new squads to unearth the corpses from the mass graves and burn them, but there were too many graves for them to complete this destruction of evidence. After the war, most of the *Einsatzkommando* and *Einsatzgruppen* leaders were tried at the Nuremberg tribunal, which judged the entire SS a criminal organization. Some SS were sentenced to death, some imprisoned, some escaped punishment. To these Nazis, possibly all Nazis, killing Jews was more important than winning their war.



## THE KILLING SQUADS IN IVYE

*As soon as the Nazis entered Ivye, local Gentiles victimized their Jewish neighbors for four days. On Tisha b'Av 1941, over 225 town leaders were massacred and dumped into pits. On a whim, Nazi thugs beat Ida's father nearly senseless, mutilating his face beyond recognition.*

On the Sunday morning of June 22, 1941, the day of the German attack on Russia, Ida was living in Slonim with her aunt and uncle, Zlote and Moshe Lipchin. Classes at nursing school had recently ended, and Ida was planning to go home soon. Ida still remembers that it was a sunny morning, and she was washing her hair and listening to the radio. All of a sudden, there was an emergency broadcast: all nurses, doctors, and even students were told to report to the hospitals immediately. German airplanes blackened the sky; bombs and artillery shells were exploding everywhere, and air raid sirens blared incessantly. On Monday, as the bombing continued, Ida was sent out with an ambulance. People were lying in the street with their brains splattered, their bodies dismembered and disemboweled. The ambulances could not handle all the bodies, so trucks were used. The hospitals were overflowing with dead and wounded. Ida remembers clearly "The death I saw on that one day most people would not see in a lifetime." She does not remember much else about that day, and feels that she was probably in shock.

After the bombardment, Nazi tanks and troops entered every *shtetl* and city. There was no military opposition; the Russian soldiers had fled instantly. Omnipresent anti-Jewish edicts went into effect immediately, affecting all aspects of life. Jews were not allowed on sidewalks, and had to walk in the streets. At the same time, interfering with traffic became a punishable offense. Jews could not use public facilities, could not gather for any reason, and were forbidden to travel. Jews could not possess or listen to radios. They could not go to playgrounds, parks, or hotels. There was a curfew for all Jews at dark. Jews could not make any contact with Christians, and Christians who talked to Jews faced punishment. Jews were not permitted to function in many professions. The killing or beating of Jews for any reason became permissible. Signs were posted: "For killing a dog a three mark fine would be charged; Killing Jews was free", and "Entrance is forbidden to Jews and dogs." Minor transgression of any rule could result in death. The Nazis removed all legal protection from the Jews and declared them open prey. With few exceptions, the churches remained silent, or incited their worshippers.

Within several weeks, the German Army and police left, and the killing squads arrived. The Christians were encouraged to rob and persecute the Jews for four days. Motivated by the expectation of acquiring property, and goaded on by the clergy, ordinary people suddenly turned into thieves and sadistic brutes. After the Nazis ended this pogrom, Jewish men up to the age of 65 had to report for work assignments. Harsher persecution followed: confiscation of jewelry and radios; more severe beatings; and constant humiliation. Rabbis were forced to clean sidewalks while in their prayer gowns and *talittim*. Jews were pushed to their knees and literally forced to eat grass, while the Nazis would trample on their fingers. Jews were forced to climb up trees and twitter like birds. Synagogues were converted into stables. Ida's father Chaim was forced to hold a bird above his head



while Nazis used it for target practice. Scenes like these were never before seen in the history of the world. The Nazi thugs called these sadistic pastimes their “pleasure hours”, and proudly sent photos of their leisure-time activities back home.

Soon, Jews were made to wear the infamous yellow armband or patch, with the word ‘Jude’ or letter ‘J’, or a Star of David on it. In Ivye, Jews over the age of twelve had to wear two patches, one in front, and one on the back. Signs were posted reminding Jews to wear this badge or face punishment. The patches had to be sewn on permanently, not attached with pins. Some Jews did not even have enough fabric to make separate badges for each piece of clothing. A new business was born, as enterprising Jewish peddlers started selling stars and patches. An awkward situation was created at churches when the few baptized converts turned up at services wearing their Jewish stars. Baptized or not, these were still Jews to the Nazis, and ultimately they were despised Jews to their Christian ‘brethren’.

In some areas and towns, the Gentiles also wore special armbands, but this was not in sympathy with their Jewish neighbors. In many towns, volunteer gangs of *goyim* calling themselves ‘catchers’ wore white armbands on their left arms as they rounded up Jews for delivery to the Nazis. In Vilna, they were paid ten rubles for each Jew collected. However many non-Germans did not need an incentive to hunt and kill Jews. They considered this a sport; killing Jews because “they were there.” Killing a Jew was no more disturbing than killing a rodent or insect.

Within the month, the Nazis forced Jews from the villages surrounding Ivye into a few square blocks of the *shtetl*. Concentrating the Jews in larger and fewer areas made guarding, administering, and moving the Jews easier. The Nazis knew from the start that they would be moving the Jews somewhere, although the “Final Solution” was to be annihilation rather than emigration. Ida’s family was given several days to leave their home, to find a new living place in Ivye. They were allowed to take only what they could carry. The small area Jews were crowded into was not yet ‘the ghetto’, which was still being prepared. Ida and her family moved into her uncle’s home, along with two other families whom they knew. In other homes, strangers were forced to live together, one family per room. Jewish women were forced to cut their hair short to supposedly prevent spread of lice-borne diseases, and plainly, to humiliate them. Nazi soldiers came by regularly to check for ‘cleanliness’. In actuality, the Nazis raided homes to confiscate valuables, and to punish anyone who may have broken the most recent edict. Offenders whose homes were not meticulously clean, or whom the brutal soldiers just felt like assaulting, were beaten. During one inspection, Ida’s brother Joe was beaten mercilessly because he kept his hands in his pockets during the inspection.

The first mass killing in Ivye took place on the holiday of *Tisha b’Av*, the Ninth of Av 1941, the Jewish Fast Day commemorating the destruction of the Temple. On the Sunday morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the town’s men were told to go to the square to supposedly register for work. They were made to stand in rows, and the local Gentiles pointed out the rabbis, *shochets*, teachers, and town leaders to the Germans. Their goal was to break all possible future resistance. The Nazis made sure to not ‘select’ anyone they might need: blacksmiths, carpenters, medical staff.



The non-German bystanders took this opportunity to settle old scores, real or imagined. They picked up wooden and metal bars, and beat anyone they wished. Pity the teacher who had given a poor grade or a reprimand to a Polish *sheygets* (young Gentile man). Rabbis were told to desecrate their revered prayer books. When they refused, they were beaten mercilessly.

Trucks then arrived and took 25 selected men at a time to the forest in Stonevitsch, less than two miles away. They were forced to dig shallow graves, so close together that the graves touched. Then, waiting drunken Lithuanian policemen shot them so they toppled into the graves. Trucks came every 25 minutes until 225 men were murdered. During this time, the trembling Jews standing in the square were forced to sing to entertain their guards. Afterwards, the families of the slaughtered men were told that their men had been taken for a work assignment. The Nazis demanded ransom for their safe return, and collected valuables from the victims' families. Some women even freely gave food packages to the Germans, to be given to their men who they thought were still alive. Ida's good friend Chaya Chodosz lost her father in this massacre, but she did not yet know it.

Several days after this mass killing, Ida's father Chaim was almost killed. He had left home early that morning to attend a *shiva* (mourning) service for an acquaintance. As he approached his home carrying his *siddur*, *tefilin*, and *talit*, two Nazis stopped him and screamed: "Dirty Jew! Are you praying to your G-d that we lose the war?" They made him burn his *talit*, and then his *siddur*, page-by-page. Then they started to beat him with their rifles, mercilessly pounding his head. Leah and her children heard the commotion and looked out their window, and saw Chaim being beaten in the street. She ran out and begged the Nazis to not kill her husband, literally kissing their hands and dirty boots. They left Chaim so near death that everyone thought he would die. His swollen face was cut, bloody, and unrecognizable. Years later he suffered strokes, possibly a result of this beating.

Fatefully, the *shiva* call Chaim made on that day was for the first cousin of Ben Levine, Karen Segal's father. The deceased man was Shimon Kinkulkin, the cousin of Philip Kinn (formerly Kinkulkin), and a family friend until his recent death. Shimon had been part of the slave labor crew sent to work in the nearby woods, along with Ida's brother Joe and cousin Joe. They were all forced to do lumberjacking work, cutting down the huge trees. Few of these men had any experience in this dangerous work, and many men were killed when the trees fell uncontrollably. Shimon died this way, leaving a pregnant wife who was later killed by the Nazis.

One day, the Germans found a large abandoned Russian tank, miles out of town. It was damaged, and could not be driven or steered. The Nazis rounded up every Jewish man and boy in Ivye, lashed them to the tank with ropes and chains, and ordered them to pull it to Ivye. The immovable hulk weighed over 50 tons—100,000 pounds, and could barely be budged. A large pole was attached to the tank to serve as a rudder. Nazis sat on the tank and used whips with sharp metal shards braided into the tips to beat their victims endlessly. Joe and his father were both shackled to the tank, but Joe's father was taller, and bald. The Nazis targeted his hairless head, and whipped him so badly that when he came home his entire head



was raw, bloody, and almost skinned. It took over a week for the tank to be pulled to where the Germans wanted it, and it was then just left in the center of Ivye.

During this ominous time, Ida was still in Slonim, desperately wanting to go back to her family in Mishukovitz. But Jews were not allowed to travel. The Kozlowski family had a Gentile neighbor by the name of Yan Bercuk who was willing to smuggle Jews, for some payment naturally. Yan had no special sympathy for Jews, but he never betrayed anyone to the Nazis. Yan's risky and tortuous adventures involved many members of the Kozlowski family, and he eventually got Ida home. During the Russian occupation of Slonim, Ida's maternal uncle Moshe Lipchin had been put on trial by the Communists because he was a business owner, and therefore automatically part of the exploiting 'proletariat'. He owned a shoe factory, and a shoe and sandal store on Slonim's main street. At his trial, his employees testified that he was a fair man who often donated shoes and clothing to poor people. He was found innocent, but was forced to give up his factory and business, as happened to all business owners. He sold whatever equipment he could, gave the rest to charity, and went to work making shoes in a collective shop. The prosecutors were not happy with the outcome of the trial and sent police to search his home, hoping to incriminate him again. Inopportunely, he had kept some valuable leather remnants in his home, a possible offense. He knew that if found guilty, he would be sent to the dreaded Siberian prison camps, and so he fled to the area around the Lithuanian city of Vilna, then controlled by Poland, 90 miles away.

When the Nazi invasion drove the Russians out, Jewish travel was restricted immediately, but at least the threat of Siberia was gone. Therefore, Zlote decided to risk bringing her husband back home. She hired Yan to smuggle Moshe home, paying him with leather goods. Yan traveled to Vilna with Zlote hidden in his wagon full of hay and produce, and then also hid Moshe in the wagon for the long trip back to Slonim. On the return trip they stopped at the Kozlowski home in Mishukovitz, which was roughly halfway between Slonim and Vilna. Here they picked up Zlote's son Zalman, who was staying with the Kozlowski family. They arrived safely in Slonim, and then Yan took Ida with him for the trip back to Mishukovitz. Ida took off her yellow star and hid in the back of the wagon. If stopped, Yan was prepared to tell the Nazis that Ida was his ailing wife. Both of them risked death if found out. Luckily, they were not stopped during these risky trips. After the war, Yan's brother lived in New York, and sometimes visited the Kozlowski family.

The Jews of Slonim were not so fortunate, and most were killed in several major slaughters. In one massacre, thousands of resisting Jews were roasted to death in fires set by Nazis, who were afraid to confront the Jews face-to-face. Hundreds of Slonim's Jews also escaped to the forests during the last desperate days. Some joined partisan groups, some hid, and many died.

There is now a small memorial marker in Stonevitsch marking the grave pits. Every year relatives of the ghetto survivors come to Ivye on the Jewish calendar date corresponding to the May 12<sup>th</sup> slaughter. They come from the U.S., Israel, Russia, Western Europe, and elsewhere to hold a *Yizkor* memorial service for those who perished. An ugly apartment building stands over the former Ivye Jewish cemetery. The town priest looks after the few remaining Jewish tombstones.



## THE GREAT SLAUGHTER (*Shechitah*): Ivye, May 12, 1942

*On a single day, 2,482 Jewish men, women, and children of Ivye were murdered by Nazi butchers and their cronies. They were shot to death in pits dug beforehand by their fellow Jews, and covered with dirt. Then the vile Gentile peasants dug up the fresh graves to search for valuables on the still-warm corpses of their former neighbors. The Jews of Ivye never recovered from this most tragic day in their history.*

Between September and May 1942, hundreds of Jews from the surrounding villages were brought into Ivye, including the Kozlowski family. The Jewish population swelled to over 4,000 people, all jammed into a small section of the town. Families were crowded as many as six to a home where one had lived before. At the same time, the Nazis started preparing a fenced-in ghetto in another area of Ivye. In early May, the *Einsatzgruppen* started accelerating their daily routine of harassment and persecutions in Ivye, leading up to the Great Slaughter.

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, Jews were forced to turn in all brass utensils, to be used for German artillery casings. Jewish women were made to shave their heads. Jewish homes had their electricity cut off. Furs and other clothing had to be turned in. It was difficult to keep up with the numerous rules and edicts, which were changed arbitrarily. This just gave another excuse for the Nazis to beat or kill Jews who broke the most recent pronouncement. Many Jews started to go into hiding wherever they could, expecting the worst.

On the morning of May 8<sup>th</sup>, large numbers of Nazi troops and local police practiced military exercises in the square. Later that day the Nazis surrounded the Jewish area, and policemen were stationed 10 feet apart on the streets. Jews were not permitted to go outdoors or to look out windows. Random rifle shots were heard frequently, which further terrorized the already frightened populace.

On May 10<sup>th</sup>, dozens of Jews were taken out of their homes and forced to dig two large ditches in the nearby Stonevitsch forest. The ditches were so large it is questionable as to whether many Jews yet realized or accepted that these were to be mass graves, or how many people would be crammed into these pits.

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, the Germans announced that their planned *Aktionen* had been canceled indefinitely. The cancellation was ostensibly a reward for the large amount of valuables that the Judenrat had collected for the Nazis. The Judenrat was told to collect another 150 rubles in gold, to insure continued tranquility. The water well was opened to Jews one hour a day. Gullible innocents who had gone into hiding apparently believed that the danger was over and came out of hiding.

May 12<sup>th</sup> began as a beautiful sunny day. Early that morning, German troops armed with guns and whips barged into the Jewish homes, screaming "Rouse,...rouse", "Out,...out". People were pushed out of their homes without even being allowed to dress fully. Identity papers were the only belongings the Nazis told them to take. Some people were able to grab small valuables or jewelry, not knowing what was to happen or where they were to be taken. Valuables could be



used to bribe people, or to buy food or medicine. Jews too frail to leave their homes were shot, often in their beds. Those found hiding were shot on sight. Many infants and children were left behind, either out of desperate optimism that they might be spared, or in the hope that the parent or even a stranger might return to save the child. It was not to be. Parents who later came back from the impending slaughter found dead infants in pools of blood; babies were shot to death in their cribs.

The terrified victims were forced into the area around the town square and adjacent Barodina (or Barnardiner) Street, a wide street the Russians had used as a military parade ground. Here they lined up in front of the Nazis and their helpers: Polish and Lithuanian 'police', who helped the Nazis in their 'selection'. The guards were armed with clubs, rifles, machine guns, and whips, which they used constantly. Some of these police had been Ida's classmates and neighbors. Identity papers were checked carefully. Teenagers, young adults, and people that were useful for slave labor or other purposes were sent either right or left. Families with older, weaker people, sick people, young children, and infants were sent straight ahead, in the direction of the Catholic Church. This would turn out to be the most tragic day in the history of Ivye's Jews, from which they would never recover.

The Kozlowski family was grouped together, with relatives and friends all around. Ida wore her nurse's Red Cross armband, knowing it might be useful. Her father was a blacksmith, her brother Joe was a healthy teenager, and there were no infants in the family. The family appeared useful, or in the Nazi's exact words, they were "useful Jews", entitled to a reprieve. During this selection, the Nazis kept most families together, to either live or die together. The entire Kozlowski family was sent to the left, not yet knowing their fate. They were directed to the streets adjoining the square, and forced to kneel with their heads on the ground. Anyone who looked or talked up was shot. The Germans also selected the families of all those men who had been killed in the August 1941 massacre. These people were murdered that day, completely wiping out those families.

Those sent straight ahead were forced to walk to the large ditches dug the previous day. The helpless victims had to walk through two lines of the *Einsatzkommandos*, police, and local non-Germans. The tormentors lined the side of the path with whips, which they used endlessly. Those without whips jeered and threw stones, bricks, and mud, and beat their neighbors and former friends with poles, and clubs. Almost every Jew in this death march was beaten and bloodied; some were beaten half-conscious. If a Jew had to relieve himself, he was told to urinate or defecate as he walked. Jews who were too old, weak, or sick to walk were shot where they stopped. These unfortunates obeyed the commands of the bestial fiends without protest and without resisting. Many Jews tore up and destroyed any money and valuables they had with them, knowing they were being sent to their death.

At Stonevitsch, the Nazis took another opportunity to confiscate any remaining hidden valuables. Then the victims were forced to undress and go down into the pits. Some people resisted undressing, and were killed immediately. The two trenches were each nearly 100 feet long, 15 feet wide, and nine feet deep. Trucks arrived, from which drunken laughter and Lithuanian shouts could be heard. Each



truck carried 30 Lithuanian murderers armed with machine guns, along with barrels of whiskey. The Lithuanians signaled to the Jews, making slicing gestures with their hands across their throats, gesturing that their victims' lives would soon be cut off. The sounds of Hebrew prayers and cries of grief were mixed into a despondent din.

The shooting started slowly, the first victims being the stragglers who were too old, young, or weak to keep up. The efficient Germans did not waste precious bullets on children, who died the most horrible deaths. They were thrown into the pits alive, and buried by the next round of dead or dying adults. Some young men broke out of the lines, struggled with the murderers, and were cut down under a barrage of bullets. As each group of 100 Jews was killed, the murderers took a break, eating sausage and drinking *schnapps* as if on a picnic. The bloody bodies piled up in the ditches. Some people were wounded but still alive, and a few unscathed Jews jumped into the pits as soon as they heard a rifle shot, hoping to dodge the bullets.

The sounds of the shooting and the screams were carried on the wind. Ida and the others kneeling with their heads touching the ground heard these sounds, and they realized what was happening. The people being exterminated were family and friends. The people in the square all thought they would be killed next, after the butchers were done with their current victims. On that single day, 2,482 Jewish men, women and children were murdered, over half of the population of Iyve.

This horror script was repeated in town after town: digging of graves, selections, beatings, collection of clothing and valuables, and mass executions by shooting. The number killed in Iyve and the other towns is exact because the Germans kept meticulous records. They kept so many duplicate records that they were never able to destroy all the evidence of their depravity.

As the killings were winding down, the Nazi commander Leopold Vindish (or Windisch), chief of staff for the Lida region, came to the square and gave a cold-blooded speech to the remnants of Iyve's Jewry. He was a young, arrogant, and evil man, who wore incongruous white gloves as he toured the killing sites, red with blood. He barked: "the noble German people were being forced to kill the cursed Jews for good reasons: First, some Jews had stolen weapons. Second, the rich Jews in America and England had started the war. Third, the Germans hated the Jews." He also pointed out the special "gentleness" with which the *Aktion* in Iyve was carried out. He threatened the survivors that if the German Army were to suffer defeats, their end would come sooner. Vindish made his rounds and gave similar speeches at dozens of villages and killing sites, always wearing his white gloves. Ida remembers the name of this sadistic Vindish to this very day. More than 30 years after the war, Vindish was tried for his crimes and received life imprisonment.

When the shooting finally stopped, the 1300 survivors who had been kneeling in the area of the square were herded into the newly prepared Jewish ghetto. Later that day, the Germans entered the ghetto and took 50 young Jewish men to cover the pits in which their friends and relatives lay. When they got there, some of the victims were still breathing, and 60 or so Nazis and Polish police were walking on the shifting corpses, putting final bullets into any body that showed signs of life.



Some victims were barely wounded or totally unharmed, and tried to claw their way out of the pile of bodies or up the sides of the pits. None of these made it out alive. The Nazi commander Vindish also arrived at the pits, and told the Jewish workers to "Cover up this crap." The Jewish youngsters were told to pour chlorine bleach and earth over the bodies. As they did so, their eyes furtively searched the pit for relatives and friends. Periodically an agonizing wail was heard as a worker recognized a family member in the pit.

One of the young men forced to do this work was Elimelekh (Mishe) Melamed, the son of Ida's colleague, Dr. Melamed. Mishe was perhaps 16 years old at the time. Imagine your son, a 10<sup>th</sup>-grader, having to shovel dirt onto the bloodied bodies of friends and relatives, perhaps his father, mother, or sibling, some still breathing. Imagine your son not knowing if a drunken soldier with a rifle would shoot him at any moment. Many of the details of what happened at the pits are Mishe's published eyewitness account. In 1967, Mishe testified in Germany at the trials that convicted Vindish and other war criminals. Mishe Melamed now lives in Tel Aviv (as of year 2001), and has stayed in contact with Rubin and Ida Segal.

The following are our relatives who were killed in this Great Slaughter of Ivye:

- Ida's uncle Leib Kozlowski and wife Shayna; their son Shlomo; their married son Chaim and his wife Batia and their 2 children Heshe and Shaul
- Ida's aunt Rifka Baksht, whom Ida had lived with, along with her husband Nochim and 3 children: Joseph, Yehudit, Shmuel
- Ida's uncle Yitzhak and 8 family members, including his grandchildren

Other relatives killed in nearby towns within the next two years include:

- Ida's maternal grandfather Aaron Lipchin and his wife, killed in Novogrudek
- Ida's aunt Chana, husband and 4 children, killed in the Dvoretz work camp
- Ida's maternal uncle Avraham Lipchin and wife and 2 children, killed in Mir
- Ida's maternal uncle Moshe Lipchin and wife Zlote and their 2 children, Chaya and Zalman, killed in Slonim. Ida had lived with this family while going to school there.

In addition, other more distant relatives were killed in other towns. By the time the war ended, Ida had lost over 36 close relatives to the Nazis: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and first cousins. The only families or relatives who were unscathed were those who had already left Europe, and miraculously, Ida's family.

The horror at Ivye was not yet over. After the dirt was thrown over the dead bodies and the executioners left the area, the good-hearted peasants of Stonevitsch descended on the mass graves. They knew that the Nazis had previously stripped their Jewish victims of all belongings, but these ghoulish peasants came anyway to look for any overlooked earrings, rings, or even gold teeth on the still warm and bloody bodies, the corpses of their former friends and neighbors. Locals fought with each other over dead children's clothing. They dug up the mass graves, further mutilating and desecrating the bodies. A short time later, a thunderstorm hit the area, and lightening struck the home of one of these disgraceful peasants, burning it



to the ground. The highly superstitious and religious peasants thought they were being punished for their sacrilegious acts, and left the graves alone after that.

The role of the Gentiles of Stonevitsch in assisting the Nazis was possibly typical, as horrible as that may appear. This helps explain the unbelievable obstacles the Jews had in resisting, fighting, hiding, and surviving in the midst of such an unexpectedly hostile populace. The most difficult thing to understand is that this hostility was not predictable, that the Jews in these towns not only thought that their neighbors were sympathetic to their plight, but also might actually help them, or at least remain neutral. There were many instances similar to Stonevitsch, in which locals not only assisted the Nazis, but instances in which they outdid the Nazis.

One related example is the July 10, 1941 massacre at Jedwabne (or Yedwabne). Jews comprised one half of this Polish town of less than 3,200, and pre-war relationships between Gentile and Jews had been normal. As soon as the Nazis entered this small town, though, the local populace immediately initiated isolated atrocities and killings, using knives, bricks, and other handy implements. The Germans called a meeting of the town's leading Gentiles, and one of the first questions asked of the Germans was "Is it permitted to kill the Jews?" The practical Germans proposed to leave one Jewish family untouched from each profession that they needed—shoemakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, medics. A Gentile carpenter proposed that the Gentile craftsmen and workers could provide the services the Germans needed, and that therefore all the Jews should be killed. Everybody else at this town meeting agreed, including the Mayor. People from neighboring towns heard of the planned pogrom, and came to Jedwabne as if going to a pageant.

The *goyim* of this town started their killings, using hooks, axes, farm tools, and wooden clubs. Jewish children were roped together and thrown onto burning coal fires with pitchforks. The head of one young Jewish girl, Gitele Nadolnie, was hacked off and played with like a ball. For the finale, the remaining Jews of the town were herded into the square and told to put on their *tallitim* and *tefilin*. A Pole addressed them, saying: "Because you are decent Jews, we have chosen an easy way for you to die." The people were then marched to a barn near the Jewish cemetery and burned alive. The barn was not the first choice for the impromptu crematoria—the *schul* was first choice, but it was close to the homes of some Gentiles, who complained that their houses might catch fire if the *schul* was set alight. The Poles were obviously democratic in their murderous decisions.

Helpless parents watched their children burn to death at their side, crying, "Mommy, it hurts." The Poles stood around the burning barn and sang songs, ready to finish off any Jews who might try to break out. The Germans stood by and did not touch one Jew. They only took photos and gave professional advice (as for example, "Do not kill so fast. Let them suffer.") Half of the town's Gentile men participated, but the entire town witnessed these acts. The last faces the Jewish victims saw were not the faces of Nazis in uniforms, but the faces of their neighbors and supposed friends.



The Poles had no shame, and apparently still have no shame. After the war they occupied the houses of their former victims, often dismantling rooms in search of hidden gold they assumed all Jews possessed. They wore the clothes of their dead Jewish neighbors, and destroyed the Jewish cemetery. In later years, they fabricated stories of how the Nazis forced them to kill at gunpoint. Less than twelve Jews survived, and several recorded their first-hand accounts. Some conscientious Poles also recorded their eyewitness stories. {see "Neighbors" by Jan Gross, published 2001.}

It took 60 years for even a few Poles to stand up and face their dark history. On July 11, 2001, the President of Poland apologized publicly for the first time for this murderous rampage, in a ceremony watched by the world. Many Poles stayed away from this observance of Poland's dark past, and those that came still said the Germans forced the Poles to do the killing, blatantly denying the evidence. Tellingly, half the Poles surveyed opposed making any apology.

There is not much left in Ivye to recall or mark the tragedy that occurred there. Traces of its Jewish past and heritage are gone. There is only a small memorial marker in Stonevitsch marking the grave pits. An ugly apartment building stands over the former ancient Ivye Jewish cemetery. The town priest looks after the few remaining Jewish tombstones. However, every year, surviving relatives of the ghetto survivors come to Ivye on the Jewish calendar date corresponding to the May 12<sup>th</sup> slaughter. They come from the U.S., Israel, Russia, Western Europe, and elsewhere to hold a *Yizkor* memorial service for those who perished.

[An "Ivye Memorial Society" exists in the U.S., and there are annual commemoration meetings on the *Yahrzeit* of the Ivye slaughter. The Ivenets Memorial Society was combined into this group when the survivors of each dwindled due to deaths and inability to attend. The society originally met only in New York, but as the survivors moved to different states, gatherings have also been held in Florida. David, Aaron, Rosaline, Leon, and their families attended these *Yahrzeit* meetings on various occasions, and found these gatherings moving and emotional. The eloquence of the survivors, most of whom had never had an opportunity to complete elementary school, was astonishing. They met children and grandchildren of survivors, their contemporaries, all as interested and concerned as they were in preserving the memories and heroics of this tragic time in their family histories.]



## THE IVYE GHETTO

*The survivors of the Great Slaughter were forced into a wretched ghetto. Some naive Jews welcomed the move, thinking the isolation would save them. However, the Nazis already planned the final liquidation of whoever survived the terrible conditions and slave labor.*

The Germans did not invent the ghetto, which was an ancient means of containment used to isolate populations in various countries. Some ghettos were even formed voluntarily, as Jews sought to live, study, and associate with each other, uncontaminated by foreign cultures. However, the Nazis invented the sealed and gated ghettos in which Jews were endlessly tormented. As the Nazis liquidated the smaller ghettos, they forced the survivors into the remaining large ghettos, to work as slave labor until they were 'selected'. This is how some survivors lived through several ghettos. The Nazi ghettos were a combination prison, torture chamber, and concentration camp.

The Ivye ghetto was formed on May 12, 1942, the day of the Great Slaughter. The surviving Jews had barely started to mourn their dead. Thirteen hundred Jews were squeezed into a small section of the town, which was fenced in with barbed wire. Some of the ghettos were actually much worse than in Ivye. In Lodz, for example, 204,000 Jews were forced to live in an area of barely one square mile. The entire Ivye ghetto was one row of houses near Novoredker Street, behind the stores on the market square, and near the Jewish cemetery. There was one constantly guarded entry gate. Many houses had broken windows, no electricity, no water, and no heat. Every room counted as space for at least one family, including kitchens. Six families were crowded into a one-family house, and forty people now lived where six had lived before. The Germans again extorted jewelry, money, and any other valuables the traumatized survivors still had in their possession. The terrible health, sanitation, and hunger led to continual deaths, a clear Nazi objective.

Restrictions, curfews, starvation, and extortion were readily enforced in the gated ghettos. Slave labor was also easy to grab. Children would leave their home to look for food or to play, and never return. The entire Kozlowski family was assigned to various work gangs, and Ida's brother Joe nearly died during his forced labor. The Germans could also easily implement their "collective responsibility" punishments on family members of escapees or resisters, who were held captive in the ghetto. The surviving Jews had no idea as to how long they would remain in the ghettos, or how long the war might last. Therefore, many ghettos started to develop institutions such as schools, synagogues, social organizations, even police, preparing for years of this life. Underground resistance groups were formed, often led by the younger people. The Nazis used many methods to suppress Jewish resistance and escape.

The Nazis had the *Judenrat* do most of the dirty work for them. *Judenrat* councils were composed of either 24 members for communities of over 10,000 Jews, or 12 members for smaller communities. The *Judenrat* was forced to collect ransom and valuables, and to pick out Jews for slave labor and resettlement. If the *Judenrat* refused, the members themselves were shot or 'resettled.' These councils mostly



believed that the Jewish underground and partisan movements endangered lives and brought extermination nearer by antagonizing the Nazis, which is what the Nazis wanted the *Judenrat* to believe. The *Judenrat* encouraged cooperation with the Nazis through work, believing Jews might be spared if they made their services indispensable. It is still debated whether the often-unpopular *Judenrat* thought they were truly helping their fellow Jews, or were traitors because they helped the Nazis. The *Judenrat* most often did not cooperate or knowingly tolerate any resistance or escape plans, as it usually led to reprisals and increased oppression, sometimes specifically targeted at the *Judenrat* members themselves. Later, as the stories and events became more credible, and when all options seemed equally fatal, the resistance and escapes increased in intensity, but very often too late.

It may be hard to believe, but some older and more naive Jews welcomed the forced move into the ghetto. They had heard of, or lived through, ghetto life, persecutions, pogroms, and restrictions before. Adaptation to those circumstances had resulted in survival, and this did not seem much different. They imagined the separation from the Nazis might bring calm, and that the gates would prevent anti-Semites from entering and tormenting them. They hoped the *Judenrat* and Jewish police would serve as protection. There was wishful dreaming that this isolation might make it possible to survive the war, even if coupled with oppression and privation. No one believed that the Nazis would kill millions of people for no logical reason, or that ghettos would be wiped out *en masse* in a matter of hours.

The ghettos were so short of food that longtime friendships broke over pieces of bread. The Germans used starvation as one means of solving their 'Jewish question', as starving Jews was cheaper than shooting them. They meticulously calculated the starvation regimens down to the last calorie of food intake for both laborers and non-laborers, using human guinea pigs. The Nazis dispensed a precise food ration of less than 1,000 calories per day, barely half of the calories required for survival. Long-term intake at these calorie levels results in mental and physical deterioration, and a slow death. Some ghettos were doled out less than 700 calories a day per person, leading to fast starvation. This is why photos of ghetto Jews show slow and lethargic movement, and skeleton-like appearance. The few apparently well-fed people probably suffered from "hunger swelling", a result of bone and muscular atrophy. The poor nutrition, overcrowding, and lack of sanitation led to epidemics of scurvy and typhus. In many ghettos, 20% of the population died of starvation and disease. Death from starvation, dehydration, and disease were listed as 'death by natural cause' in the Nazi's meticulous records. Lice were everywhere, carrying disease and causing constant skin infections.

From May 12 until October, Ida worked in the ghetto clinic as the only nurse assisting four doctors, watching people dying from starvation and contagious diseases. Another nurse, a graduate of Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, had already been killed in one of the mass killings, along with her small child. The doctor in charge of the clinic was Dr. Ayzik Melamed, a kind man. Ida later worked with him in the partisans, and in a Russian hospital after the war. At risk to his own life, Dr. Melamed would inject milk intramuscularly into Jews who were to be "resettled" so that they would develop a fever and be spared from that one-way trip.



If a patient had typhus, he did not report it, as typhus patients were often shot immediately to halt the spread of this contagious disease.

Ida's brother Joe was grabbed one day from the ghetto streets, and sent to a forced labor camp. Here he became gravely ill, and believed he would soon be dead, either from the illness or from a Nazi bullet, as Jews too sick to work were simply killed. For whatever reason, Joe was transferred to a hospital. While recovering, a nurse told him that he was doubly lucky, as the slave workers were all sent back to the Ivye ghetto, which was liquidated while he was in the hospital. Joe thought he was the only one in his family to survive. From the hospital, Joe was sent to the Lida ghetto, from which he escaped with a group of 20 friends. They ran 12 miles to the forest, where they soon encountered a group of Jewish Partisans. Joe and his friends did not have guns, and the Jewish fighters would not take in any unarmed men, Jews or not. Joe and his friends made their way to Mishukovitz, hoping to meet up with any surviving family who might have escaped from Ivye. There his neighbors told him that his family might be hidden near the *shtetl* of Bereva, in a hiding place that Rubin had mentioned. Joe somehow found and joined his family.

Joe's experience in the slave labor camp was typical, except that he did not die there as many others did. The alternative was immediate death for those too young, old, weak, or sick to work. Slave labor was important for the Nazis because it freed up German men to fight. The labor camps were also another means of genocide. The Nazis had a formal policy of "annihilation through work", analogous to their "death through starvation" plans. The forced labor regimens including 14-hour workdays, whippings and beatings, meals of watery rotten-potato soup, and arbitrary death at the whim of sadistic guards. Death was common in the work camps, resulting from gangrene, dysentery, pneumonia, diphtheria, starvation, and freezing temperatures. The meticulous Germans wrote down that all such deaths were from 'natural causes'. Some Jews could not endure the never-ending torture, and intentionally ran into the high-tension electric wire surrounding the camps.

Humiliation and indignities were piled on daily. At one work camp, Jewish workers were made to sleep in dog kennels. Local villagers would come by for outings, to look at the Jews in cages, to taunt them and throw things at them. The Poles who jeered at the wretched Jewish victims in the ghettos or labor camps did not realize that they were looking at their own future. The Nazis were prepared to enslave or kill the entire Polish population, 30 million people. In the Nazi hierarchy, the Poles were one of the next groups slated for extermination, right after the Jews and the Gypsies. The Nazis considered the Poles 'primitive, stupid, and dirty' among other descriptors. Thirty million people may sound so high as to be implausible, but Nazi documents show that they were planning to kill all of Europe's nearly 12 million Jews...**within one year**, if their assembly-line death camps worked as their engineers planned. Killing 30 million more would only have taken them a little longer. If killing 12 million Jews and 30 million Poles sounds implausible, Hitler's plans for the Ukraine were even grander. Hitler considered Ukrainians on a par with Jews, sub-human "bacillus" to be eradicated. Hitler planned to empty the Ukraine of its 40 million inhabitants, leaving only enough alive to serve as slave laborers for German colonists.



## ESCAPE FROM THE IVYE GHETTO

*Rubin found out about the planned liquidation of the Ivye ghetto, and was able to get a message to Ida, telling her that her family must escape. On a snowy winter night, Ida and a small group camouflaged themselves with white bed sheets. They crept under the barbed wire, and crawled miles to freedom, thinking that each step would be their last. They escaped from the doomed ghetto just days before its end. The Kozlowski family was the only Ivye family to survive the war intact.*

While the Kozlowski family was trying to survive in the Ivye ghetto, Rubin had already escaped from the doomed Ivenets ghetto. Soon after Rubin's escape, the Ivenets ghetto was liquidated. His mother, sisters, and scores of other relatives were killed. Rubin vowed revenge, and joined the Russian partisans.

During one mission, Rubin rode past Mishukovitz, hoping to find out Ida's fate. He stopped at the Kozlowski home, and saw that it was empty. He heard noises next door, and saw objects being flung out a window. He recognized some of Ida's clothes, and approached the neighbors. Victor and Sasha Minko were longtime friends of the Kozlowski family, good and sympathetic Christians. Sasha's sister Suzanna recognized Rubin, as he had coincidentally painted a home in which she worked as a housekeeper. Suzanna could not believe that Rubin was still alive. The Kozlowski family had given some belongings to Sasha to look after when they were forced from their home. Sasha got frightened when she heard the partisans, thinking they might take the goods or harass her if they entered her house.

Sasha told Rubin that Ida and her family were in the Ivye ghetto, and that Ida was working as a nurse in a clinic outside the ghetto. Sasha had known Ida ever since birth, and considered Ida almost part of her family. She was willing to risk bringing letters to Ida, a dangerous mission. She managed to either pass the letters through the ghetto barbed wire fence, or furtively gave them to Ida when she left the ghetto to go to the clinic. They were also able to arrange short meetings in the house of a mutual friend when Ida was out of the ghetto. Ida received the first letter from Rubin in the summer of 1942, just several months after the Ivye ghetto was formed. They exchanged more than ten letters in four months. In the first letter, Rubin told Ida that he was alive and in the partisans, and that he could help her escape. He also asked for any medicine that she could spare to treat wounded comrades. Ida gave Sasha medicine, bandages, food, and a small stove to give to Rubin.

In a near-final letter, Rubin warned Ida of the planned liquidation of the Ivye ghetto, scheduled for January 1943. Partisan spies had learned of the fatal date, and Jewish Partisans were hurriedly contacting people they knew to warn them to escape. After the May 12<sup>th</sup> *Aktion*, most of the imprisoned Jews realized that they would be killed soon also, and breakouts were becoming more frequent, but more dangerous. Most people escaped in groups of up to twenty or more, and fled to hide in the forests or to be taken in by various partisan groups. Many Jews escaped but were caught or turned in for trivial rewards by Gentile peasants, or were killed by anti-Semitic partisans. Some Jews successfully escaped but eventually died of starvation, exposure to the cold, or betrayal by non-Germans.



Ida's father Chaim was initially afraid to leave the ghetto. He was not willing to accept that his whole family was about to be annihilated. He did not know how his family could escape, or how his family would survive in the forest. He did not know about the Jewish partisans, and knew that the Russian Partisan groups would consider him too old to join their ranks, although he was only 48 years old. Even if they accepted him, no Russian Partisan group would take his wife and children. However, Rubin's chilling letter meant the family had no choice but to risk the dangerous escape immediately. Rubin arranged for safe houses, guides, and refuge stops for each member of the family. The family would be separated, escaping by differing paths. Everything had to be timed so all family members would be outside the ghetto within a few days of each other, because if anyone was caught escaping those remaining in the ghetto would be killed in retribution.

Chaim's work as a blacksmith took him and Leah outside the ghetto, and so they were able to arrange their own escape somewhat easier than the others. Rubin knew of an abandoned hut in a remote part of the woods, where Chaim and Leah were led for refuge. Young Gloria was somehow spirited out of the ghetto and left with their good neighbor Sasha, in Mishukovitz. She would be taken to join her parents a few days later, and the three of them remained hidden in the forest for nearly one-and-a-half years. Many Jewish families were forced to endure such a risky and lengthy forest refuge, including the family of Dinah Magids, who would later marry Ida's brother Joe. At this time, Joe was in a slave labor camp far from Iyve, struggling to stay alive, but at least he was out of the ghetto.

Ida and Marcia became the last two family members left in the ghetto. They had to wait for the right opportunity to escape. Bad weather and darkness offered the best chance to avoid capture. Rain and snow discouraged the guards from an extended search, and made it difficult for the Nazi's dogs to track the runaways. In addition, rain or snow reduced visibility, and limited the penetration of the searchlight beams. Extremely bad weather could also be dangerous to the escapees, who sometimes got lost until daylight revealed their whereabouts. Ida, Marcia, and several friends decided to escape during the first snowfall. They planned their every step: the houses which had hiding places, the shadowy path to the ghetto fence, where they would slip under the barbed wire, what they would take with them, the next stops, their camouflaging cover. They did not plan to die, but knew what would happen to them if they were caught.

On the next snowy winter night, 20-year-old Ida, her 15-year-old sister Marcia, Ida's best friend Frooma Tamfel (spelled Frume Tanfel in some accounts) and several others gathered white bed sheets. They walked through the dark ghetto streets to a house on the edge of the ghetto in which Morris Albert's uncle had lived, and in which a *malina* (small hiding place) had been built. By this time, many houses, both Gentile and Jewish, had built *malinas*, as wartime fright spread. A small, concealed opening had also been made in the basement wall so people could leave the house low to the ground, and without opening doors. The terribly frightened young people wrapped themselves with the sheets to blend into the snow, and carefully squeezed through the small opening. Marcia also stuck a piece of fabric in her shirt. This was the most valuable thing she could find, and thought she might need this to barter for



food or sanctuary. Then they waited until the patrolling guards were walking away from them. They crawled on their bellies in groups of two through the protective snow for over one-half mile, shivering the entire way from both fright and the frigid cold. At the edge of the ghetto, they squeezed under the barbed wire fence, all of them scared to death and thinking they would be killed at any moment. With the white camouflage sheets wrapped around their bodies, they blended into the snow, and slipped undetected past the guards and the bright searchlights.

Once outside the ghetto, the group still had to get away from Ivye, which was full of Nazis. They crept and walked fearfully to the edge of town, keeping in the shadows, thankful for the heavy snowfall. After they got a distance out of Ivye, they removed their yellow Jewish stars. They crawled the next six miles through deep snow and freezing water to their next pre-arranged stop in Mishukovitz. There they joined their sister Gloria in Sasha's house. Marcia remained here with Gloria for two or three days, while Ida and Frooma soon went to another safe house in the woods, which the Jewish Partisans had prearranged. This house was just outside the village, and was owned by an obliging Gentile named Alexander Angur. Alexander helped the young Jews at some risk to himself, but no one knows whether it was out of compassion, greed, or fear. He was paid with some goods for his help, but no doubt, the knowledge that Jewish Partisans had arranged this operation was a factor. If he betrayed this group, his future would be short, as the partisans did not tolerate treachery. In fact, a short time later, Alexander helped another group of five Jews who did not have any partisan protectors. The entire group was somehow killed as they made their way from his home.

Ida and Frooma were old enough to join the partisans. They planned to fight, or to die fighting. With Ida's medical training, she would be welcome in any partisan unit. After another day, Alexander took them to another safe house at a farm, 4 miles further away. A good Gentile family lived here, and the farmer's wife was extremely kind to the young and scared Jewish girls. Her benevolence was well repaid later, when Rubin saved their lives from the undeserved anger of a hot-headed partisan named Victor. In turn, she repaid Rubin by warning him that Victor was planning to kill him and the other Jews in their partisan unit. This house also had a *malina* where Ida and her friends hid, a double wall between two rooms just wide enough to fit several people. The next day, Rubin, Joe Starkman, and other Jewish Partisans arrived at that house to take Ida and Frooma to join their partisan unit. Ida felt free, but thought her freedom would be short-lived.

Marcia and Gloria were of course too young to be taken in by any fighting partisan group. Therefore, these two young girls were moved secretly from house to house until Rubin was able to take them to the abandoned hut deep in the woods where their parents were hidden. At the same time, Rubin was similarly saving other Jews, whether he knew them or not, risking his life for strangers as well as friends.

The Ivye ghetto liquidation started just days after Ida's escape, on December 31, 1942. Within three weeks, the liquidation was complete. On January 20, 1943, the Nazis proudly declared Ivye '*Judenrein*', meaning free (literally 'cleansed') of Jews. Centuries of Jewish life in Ivye ended. It was never rebuilt.



## THE KILLING SQUADS IN IVENETS

*The Nazis gathered the Jews of Ivenets and machine-gunned 75 men to death. Days later, 200 other men were massacred. One day, policemen clubbed Rubin nearly unconscious. Luckily, Rubin was saved by a policeman who needed Rubin to finish painting a cabinet.*

When Germany attacked Russia, some residents of Ivenets naively did not believe that they would be affected. There was a large Red Army garrison in Ivenets, and Russia's might seemed overwhelming. However, the Russian Army retreated almost as soon as the German bombardment started, and within two days Germany controlled the town. Not much physical damage was actually done to the town by the bombing. Within days, the *Einsatzkommandos* ran through every Jewish house, viciously pulling all Jews into the town square. There they announced that three Nazi airplanes had been shot down during the German air attack, and that the Jews of Ivenets killed the pilots. This of course was an outright lie. The Jews of Ivenets had no weapons, and did not fire a shot, even if they wanted to.

The Nazis used the pointless pretext of 'retaliation for attacks on Germans' in numerous instances as justification for their killing. For whatever reasons, the Nazis often fabricated excuses, as if they needed a rationale for their crimes. Official reports submitted by the killing squads repeated similar pretexts for mass killings: "acts of sabotage"; "refusal to obey orders"; "offering resistance", and so on. One form of excuse came back to hurt the Nazis. The written excuse "shot 2,000 partisans" was used during the Nuremberg trials as justification for killing armed adversaries. However, the Nazis noted places and times at which only a handful of partisans existed. It is difficult to kill 2,000 partisans when only 50 or 100 existed.

The reprisal for the supposed killing of the three German pilots was immediate. The Nazis herded over 300 Jewish men to the Ivenets army parade ground on the pretext of picking people for a work detail. They gathered the remaining Jews and made them look on as they forced these men to sing Nazi songs to the German guards. Then they started the 'selection' of those soon to be killed, still telling them they were being picked for a work detail. The townspeople assisted the Nazi killers in their selection, obviously knowing the true intent. They specifically pointed out the Rabbis, *shochets*, and leaders of the town's Jewish community, their former neighbors, singling out 75 men, 25 Jews for each downed pilot.

Twenty-one year old Rubin stood there along with the others. He naively believed the people selected were really being sent on a work assignment, and without thinking further, he and a friend jumped forward to volunteer for the work group. To this day, he cannot explain why he did this. A Polish policeman who knew Rubin literally kicked him in the butt, and told him to get back into line. At that time, Rubin did not realize that the policeman had saved his life, and he still does not know if the policemen realized it either, or just wanted to push Rubin around. This was perhaps the first 'miracle', where Rubin was saved from death by fateful and inexplicable intervention.



The Germans then announced that this was not a work detail, but a 'warning killing' brought on by the Jews themselves. They gave the men one hour to pray to their G-d to save them. With all the people of the town watching, these men prayed. Rubin remembers, "The praying was so loud they were probably heard in America." The holy prayer *שמע ישראל*, *Shema Yisroel*, "HEAR O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS OUR G-D, THE LORD IS ONE" were the last words they uttered. In one hour, these 75 men were gunned to death in front of their wives, parents, children, and friends.

The surviving Jews were then forced to pull the dead bodies to a common grave. Actually, a grave would have been a blessing. The bodies were thrown into a ditch into which outhouse sewage was emptied. The bodies were to be buried in excrement! During this burial work, two Jews were miraculously found to be wounded but alive. They were pulled to safety, only to be killed several days later during the next mass killings. Rubin knew almost all of the people killed that day, including the two survivors. At the age of 21, Rubin had seen his neighbors, friends, and family members killed for no reason. He had been forced to pull their bodies into a mass grave not worthy of any human or animal.

After this *Aktion*, the several hundred surviving men of Ivenets were jammed into the town stores adjoining the square. The doors were locked, and soldiers stood outside. The days passed, with the locked up men living on bread and water that the Germans threw in. The Jewish women of the town came by to look into the windows, looking to see if their husbands, sons, or fathers were alive. Rubin's mother came looking for her son, and saw him through a window. He was alive, but everyone doubtlessly thought the Germans were still not finished with their killing. The men were taken out to relieve themselves in groups of ten, under armed guard. On one of these trips to the toilet, a Nazi guard told Rubin's group that the Germans would not win this war, and this war would result in Germany's destruction. Rubin never again heard such surprisingly realistic words from any Nazi. After four days of confinement, the Nazis freed the men, and Rubin returned to his family.

The next day the Nazis started work on the Ivenets ghetto. At the same time, Jews were being rounded up and shipped out to forced labor camps or to other *shtetl* ghettos. Some Jews may still have harbored the illusion that the Nazi killings would somehow end, but it was obvious to Rubin and his friends that the Nazis meant to kill every Jew in Ivenets, and probably the world. After their release, Rubin and his friends immediately started to prepare a hiding place under his barn, large enough to hide ten people. They dug only at night, afraid that their neighbors would betray them if they saw what they were doing. They disposed of the removed earth far away, so it would not lead anybody to their refuge. They lined the top and sides of the burrow with boards, and put a movable rock over the hidden entrance. They kept candles and water in this den, and they hid here whenever the Nazis rounded up Jews. During the next months, they stayed in this shelter for days on end.

The *Einsatzkommandos* organized the Ivenets *Judenrat*, the Jewish council. They made all Jews wear a yellow patch, upon penalty of death. Soon the plain patch or armband was replaced with either the yellow patch with a Star of David, or the patch itself had to be in the shape of the Star. Notices were posted near building



entrances and exits reminding Jews to wear these at all times, and to make sure the badges were in the right place and attached as required—sewn, not pinned.

The non-Jewish population of Ivenets, like all other towns in the area, appeared mostly delighted with these rules, and many men eagerly volunteered to assist the Nazis. One wonders whether the Nazis would ever have been able to implement their fanatical anti-Semitic policies without the enthusiastic participation of the non-Germans. In very many cases, there was a practical benefit for the rampant anti-Semitism. The Gentiles were greedy for whatever possessions their poor Jewish neighbors had—homes, fields, furniture, businesses, livestock, even clothing. For these mostly meager material things, the Gentiles turned into Jew-hunters and murderous mobs. The Nazis took advantage of this petty greediness and publicized their policy of sharing spoils. The corruption of the anti-Semitic non-Germans was fairly easy, and even those that did not participate in the killings were able to share in the bloody plunder, often literally bloody.

The new German-appointed “police force” recruited unemployed men, Gentile thugs, hoodlums, thieves, drunks, and even criminals. Some men volunteered for these jobs because they were promised a share of Jewish property as their wages. Amateurs by the scores volunteered to be policemen, ready to beat, torture and kill Jews as part of their duty. People that Rubin had grown up with and had considered friends now regarded him as another ‘dirty Jew’. One young Polish man who knew Rubin and his family for years became a ‘policeman’ for the Nazis. This man was a former classmate, and supposed ‘friend’. His parents were acquaintances of Rubin’s mother, and had bought meat from her for many years. This law enforcement officer approached Rubin in the street one day and demanded Rubin’s boots, right off of his feet. Rubin tried to reason with him, and told him he had no other shoes to wear, but the policeman threatened to kill Rubin if he did not obey. A crowd gathered around this confrontation. With heroic and foretelling dignity, five-foot-tall Rubin took off his boots and whacked the taller policeman over his head with the boots. (Almost everyone was taller than Rubin, then and now.) The crowd cheered. Embarrassed, the bullying policeman ran away. The next day, this policeman then came around with a group of his cohorts, looking to put Rubin into the next ‘selected’ group, to be killed. Rubin went into his hiding place, staying there for days, and was safe for the moment.

The next mass killing occurred within the month, while Rubin was still in hiding from this policeman. This time the *Einsatzkommandos* picked the Jewish High Holidays for their mass killings. As the tormented Jewish population was preparing for Rosh Hashonah, the holiest time of the year, the Nazis started to pull Jews at random from their homes, away from their mothers, wives, husbands, and children. When Rubin emerged from his burrow under the barn, another 200 of his neighbors, friends and family, people who he had known his whole life, had been killed. There were several more *Aktionen* and arbitrary killings by Polish policeman—upholders of law and order. Among these indiscriminate killings, the Nazis and ‘police’ selected two Jewish midgets who resided in Ivenets. The Nazis first humiliated these unfortunate people by forcing them to dance and entertain them, and then they shot them to death.



## ESCAPE FROM THE IVENETS GHETTO

*Roslyn Segalowicz took her only son aside, and tearfully told him to flee the ghetto before they were all killed, to escape to fight the Nazi butchers. He did not want to abandon his family, but knew that he had no choice. He escaped from a work camp and joined the partisans. He never saw his mother again, never even said goodbye. The Nazis killed his mother, his younger sisters, and his baby niece and nephew.*

The Jews of Ivenets were forced into the ghetto in October 1941, soon after the mass killing that took place on the High Holidays. Jews had been forced for months to build their own prison, to build the ghetto walls and gates. When the time came to move into the ghetto, armed German soldiers banged on every Jewish door in Ivenets and gave the occupants ten minutes to leave their homes. The hapless victims were allowed to take only what they could carry. Jews put on layers of clothing, five jackets on top of five sweaters on top of five shirts. They filled their pockets with food, jewelry, or money. They were then herded into this old section of town and forced to find living quarters wherever they could, often one family to a room. Soon Jews from the small surrounding villages were also brought in.

The Ivenets ghetto was surrounded by wooden board walls, and had two entrance gates with guards at each entrance. The entire ghetto was the length of ten city blocks, with two long major streets. It was split into sections, and Jews needed passes to go between the sections. There were no stores in the ghetto, only houses or other buildings to serve as living quarters. With the arrival of Jews from other towns, as many as ten families were made to live in each house where perhaps one or two families had lived before. Rubin and his family wound up living in a crowded house with people they barely knew.

Life in the ghetto was miserable. Living quarters were unbelievably cramped, and necessities such as food and medicine were non-existent. There were no sewage or sanitation facilities, and disease and starvation were rampant. The food the Germans provided was often nothing more than rotting, maggot-infested potatoes, or cabbage that would normally have been discarded. Even this was rationed at below subsistence levels. Pneumonia and influenza were widespread, but one of the worst diseases in the ghettos was typhus, which spread epidemically. The Nazis and even many partisan groups shot typhus victims immediately to avoid further spread of the disease. Typhus victims died a terrible death, suffering until their death from fevers as high as 106-degrees, chills, weakness, falling blood pressure, delirium, nerve damage, and body rashes. The only good things about typhus was that it was so contagious that some Nazis also contracted it from their victims, and it often kept the Nazis out of the ghetto. This disease was one of the reasons the Nazis made women shave their heads, as lice live and reproduce contentedly in human hair.

Everyone in the ghetto, from 9-year old children to the elderly, was made to work for the Nazis. Slave labor was hard, but ghetto life was so precarious that younger children often pretended to be older so they would be sent to the work camps. Some young children put on layers of bulky clothes to appear bigger and stronger.



Old people pretended to be younger, and pinched their cheeks or rubbed blood on them to make their complexions look flush and healthy. The alternative for the very young or the very old was the possibility of being 'selected', selected for slaughter.

Rubin's initial work assignment was to do street cleaning, sweeping, and painting, along with a group of six other young men. The Nazis needed so many re-named highway signs, directions, and warnings that he was soon painting full time, seven days a week. The anti-Jewish warning, penalty, and decree signs themselves were a never-ending job, because the Nazis kept on issuing new orders and changing old ones daily. For their work, the group of painters received more food than most others did: one quarter pound of bread a day, and about ten pounds of salt a month, plus some barley and flour. This was the food ration for the entire group, not for each person! Rubin gave most of his portion to his family. The other workers in the group were Rubin's friends; not one of them survived the war.

The Nazis and policemen sometimes used the painters to do private work for them. Rubin's painting skills may have saved his life. One day a policeman named Yanek Grugalski ordered Rubin to paint a fancy cabinet in his home. Rubin started doing an intricate paint job, involving glazing and wood-graining, in which the coats of paint had to dry for several days between each coat of paint. During this time, Rubin was selected for a work detail in the nearby town of Dvoretz. Grugalski saw Rubin in the work gang, and perhaps thinking that Rubin might not return to finish his cabinet, he pulled Rubin out of the work crew. The policeman left Rubin in the police station, planning to get him later. While detained there, other policemen came in, and did what they usually did to Jews. They beat Rubin with fists, clubs, and rifle butts, for no special reason. Rubin was losing consciousness, and if the beating had continued much longer, he would have died. Fortunately, Grugalski returned and stopped the beating—not to save Rubin's life, but so that Rubin could finish painting his precious cabinet. In year 2002, 60 years later, Rubin says that when he thinks about that beating, he can still feel the pain. For whatever reason, fate intervened again, and the policeman had saved Rubin's life for the sake of a wooden cabinet.

Much of Rubin's work was outside the ghetto, where he painted highway, warning, road, and direction signs. Re-entry back into the ghetto was a daily torment that Rubin recalls well and painfully. At the end of each workday, the Nazi guards made Rubin and the other workers stand at attention in front of the ghetto gate, in order of height. They would then whip each worker, one at a time as the others watched. Rubin was the shortest at five feet tall, and would get the first and worst beating. By the time the Nazis got to the last worker, they were weary, and perhaps bored of this amusement. The Nazis would then unexplainably and implausibly give each victim a cigarette. Looking back at this bizarre daily routine, Rubin himself has to laugh as he talks about it 60 years later. He laughs at the thought of the cigarette, but cringes at the memory of the ritual beatings.

By this time, all the Jews of Ivenets knew they were being prepared for extinction. They stopped fooling themselves with thoughts of survival in the ghetto, of deportation to any relief, or of the war ending before their death. They stopped



thinking that prayers would save them. They did not yet know about the death camps and the concentration camps, but knew that they were facing death, with very few alternatives for survival. One alternative was to flee the ghetto, to the forests. There was still a probability of dying there, but at least it was not a certainty. If a young person could find his way to the partisans, he might even have a better chance of surviving, or more likely, of dying with dignity.

By now, everyone knew that Russian Partisans were in the woods near Ivenets, although the existence of Jewish Partisan units was not so widespread. In any case, there were many more Russian units than Jewish units, so the main objective in any escape was to reach the Russians. However, escape from the ghettos was not easy. The Nazis realized the Jews would try to desperately escape as their fate became obvious. Anyone caught escaping was lucky to be quickly shot or hanged. Even if a Jew reached the partisans, they would not always accept Jews, especially unarmed Jews, and then the alternatives were dim. Many Jews were robbed of whatever arms they had, and either killed or sent back to the ghetto to face certain death. If a person escaped and the Nazis found out, his family would be killed. In many cases, Jews who could have resisted, escaped, or fought did not do so for fear of bringing death to their families. The Nazis made sure that everyone saw what happened to relatives of escapees or partisans.

One morning, in the thick of her despair, Roslyn Segalowicz took her only son aside. Tearfully, she told Rubin to escape, to run to the woods to find the partisans and to fight against the murderers of their family and of the Jewish people. With tears in his eyes, Rubin said "If I escape, they will kill you". She told him—"My son they will kill me anyway. My fate is sealed. I want one of my children to survive. You must survive, so you can say Kaddish for me. You will keep our memory alive."

Rubin could not yet leave his mother to die, or to be killed if the Nazis caught him or found out about his escape. He could not take her and his sisters with him, because life in the forest was hard, and not for the frail, weak, or slow. Even if they evaded the Germans, they could expect to die of cold or starvation, or at the hands of other Jew haters. Polish peasants turned Jews in for pittance rewards, or just killed them for no reason. Russian Partisan units would not take in middle-aged, unarmed people or children. Rubin stayed in the ghetto, knowing his probable fate.

During an *Aktion* in May of 1942, Rubin was torn off the ghetto street, stuffed onto a truck, and shipped out to a slave labor camp near the Novogrudek ghetto, a day's journey away. The other members of his family that were healthy and capable of hard work were also sent to this camp during the same *Aktion*. Rubin's sister Sonia, her husband Joe, and his fourteen-year-old sister Frieda were all taken to Novogrudek. His sister Freidelle (as Rubin calls her) was a tall girl, and probably looked older than 14, although even younger children were routinely picked for slave labor. None of them had a chance to tell Roslyn what was happening, or to say goodbye. All of them believed they would soon die.

Rubin's mother now had to take care of Sonia's children, 2-year-old Leibelle and 6-month-old Shulamit, in addition to her youngest daughter Moosha. Soon, another



*Aktion* occurred in Ivenets. The Nazis ordered all the Jews into the square for the recurrent harassment and selection. Roslyn took young Moosha and Leibelle with her, but left her infant granddaughter Shulamit in her crib. When Roslyn returned to their quarters, she found 6-month-old Shulamit shot to death, her head in a pool of blood. When Sonia was later transferred from the labor camp to the Novogrudek ghetto, neighbors from Ivenets told her what happened to her daughter. This was the beginning of the final chapter for Rubin's family.

Each day, the work groups were warned that if even one of them escaped, the entire group would be exterminated. This slowed the escapes, but desperate people with nothing to lose still tried to escape. Joe soon escaped from the work camp and joined a partisan unit. Within days, Joe got a message to Rubin about where to find the partisans. Rubin decided to try to escape and join the partisans, or die trying. The way things looked now, they would all die soon anyway. While on a work detail, Rubin asked the guards for permission to get water. As he crossed the road, a convoy of trucks passed between him and the guards. Rubin ducked between the trucks and ran into the nearby forest, headed for the partisans. The Novogrudek ghetto itself was later liquidated, and over 5,000 Jews perished there on August 4, 1942. Rubin's sister Sonia escaped from the Novogrudek ghetto, but Rubin's 14-year-old sister Frieda died there. Rubin was 21 years old.

By the end of May 1942, shortly after Rubin escaped, the Nazis and their 'Byelorussian police' liquidated the Ivenets ghetto. They ran through all the houses of the ghetto screaming for everyone to go outside. The Nazis and their goons beat their helpless, unarmed victims, pulled them down staircases by their hair, and literally threw them out of their homes. Some Jews were selected for slave labor, and were allowed to live—temporarily. The remaining Jews were marched out of town, beaten and whipped as they went. They were made to dig large mass graves and then forced to undress. Entire families were then shot on the spot, falling into the graves that they had just dug for themselves. The Nazis then poured kerosene over the bodies, some still alive, and set them ablaze. Local peasants stood close by, ready to assist the Germans kill their neighbors. The non-Germans also hoped to steal whatever they could—watches, earrings, even old clothes and shoes.

News of the liquidation of the Ivenets ghetto came to Rubin days later as a handful of survivors made their way through the forest. He assumed his mother was dead. He only found out after the war that his mother had somehow escaped the mass killings, and was hiding with a kind Christian family along with her daughter and grandson. Within two weeks, other Gentiles threatened to inform the Nazis that the family was hiding Jews. The family gave Roslyn a loaf of bread and halfheartedly sent her away. Roslyn and the two young children began walking to a nearby town called Horedok, where she hoped to find her brother Moshe if he was still alive. She never got there. Nobody knows where Roslyn Segalowicz died, or how. Rubin only knows that she was killed somewhere near Ivenets, walking with her young daughter holding onto her as she carried her baby grandchild in her arms.

Rubin went back after the war to search for more information, to find out how she had died, and if she suffered in death. He knew there would be no true grave



anywhere. He got no more information, and never got any resolution to the unrest in his mind. Over the years, Rubin has recalled and mentioned repeatedly that he never had a chance to even say goodbye to his mother. Since that time, Rubin says Kaddish for his mother on the day after his father's *Yahrzeit* (the anniversary of his death), which is also the date of Rubin's grandfather's *Yahrzeit*. He selected that date arbitrarily, as he has no way of knowing the exact date of Roslyn's death. Unlike many other Jewish mothers, Roslyn Segalowicz had a son and daughter who survived the Holocaust, and who today say Kaddish for her, as she wished.

The following are our relatives killed in or near Ivenets:

- Rubin's mother and two sisters.
- Rubin's niece and nephew, Sonia's children.
- Rubin's uncle Yitzhak Segalowicz and his entire family of 7 people.
- Rubin's uncle Moshe Segalowicz and his entire family of 6 people, killed in Volozhin.
- Rubin's uncle Rabbi Meyer Segalowicz and his entire family of 4 people, killed in Mir.
- Rubin's aunt Alte (Segalowicz), and her entire family of 5 people, killed in Mir.
- Rubin's aunt Gitel (Segalowicz), and her entire family of 5 people.
- Rubin's uncle Zvi Segalowicz lost his wife and 3 children. He survived, moved to Israel, remarried, and visited his US relatives. He died in Israel.

On Rubin's mother's side:

- Rubin's uncle Yankel Bloch and his entire family of 7 people, killed in Ivye.
- Rubin's uncle Chanan Bloch lost 5 people in Ivye.
- Rubin's uncle Moishe Bloch and his entire family of 4 people, killed in Horoduk.
- Rubin's uncle David Bloch and his entire family of 4 people, killed in Ivye.

In addition, other more distant relatives were killed. Rubin lost over 50 close relatives in the mass killings in Ivenets and the surrounding towns. Jewish life in Ivenets, which had thrived for hundreds of years, was erased in one day. Where Jewish children had studied and played innocently in the fields, and where Rabbis studied the intricacies and wisdom of the Talmud for hundreds of years, not one trace remained.

Although not a satisfactory conclusion, the Jewish and non-Jewish Partisans of the Russian Stalin battalion later fell upon the German contingent that was withdrawing after the liquidation of the Ivenets ghetto. The partisans won this encounter in the Nalibocki forest, the forest Rubin had fled to, and any Germans not killed in the battle were executed, to a man.

For our family, 1942 was the year in which we lost most of our relatives to the Germans, the year in which the Segalowicz and Kozlowski families were decimated. Only many years later would the world find out that 1942 was the most lethal year in Jewish history, in which over 2.7 million Jews were murdered.



## THE PARTISANS

*The partisans destroyed the myth of the invincible German soldier, and became an ever-present threat to the Nazis. Always outnumbered and outgunned, the partisans caused considerable damage to the Nazi war effort. But not all partisans fought the Nazis. Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and other 'partisans' were a constant danger to Jewish escapees and partisans.*

Partisan fighters are 'guerrilla' fighters, underground resistance fighters, operating outside a regular organized army structure. Guerrilla warfare is traditionally the war of the weak against superior, heavily armed forces, and this was the case in Eastern Europe. However, the guerrilla resistance was different in this war arena than in others for a variety of reasons. One distinctive factor was the numerous partisan factions with differing objectives, even many of the same nationality, which often clashed with each other. In addition, only some of the partisan factions could count on the support of the local population. There was also a wide disparity in partisan strength, organization, and armaments, and some of the partisans were significantly weaker than others. Perhaps most unique, not all of the partisans actually fought the enemy occupying their countries, the Nazis.

In Eastern Europe, the main accomplishments of the anti-Nazi partisans were the systematic disruption of the German war effort through the demolition of their valuable supply, communication, and transportation lines and the harassment, demoralization, and destruction of German troops. Amazingly, this was accomplished by means of relatively small-scale ground combat, without heavy weaponry, and while being constantly and heavily outnumbered. The partisans destroyed so many supply convoys, bridges, trains, and roads that the Nazis started diverting soldiers from the front to escort and protect their trains and trucks. With these partisan successes, their missions became even more dangerous, as they became more outnumbered in encounters with the Nazi patrols.

Surprisingly, the Nazis at first almost welcomed the formation of partisan units, believing that they would be ineffective, not damage the German war effort, and at the same time give the Nazis a credible excuse for killing all 'armed' opponents, whether they had weapons or not. However, the partisans quickly became more powerful than expected, and developed into an ever-present menace to the Nazis. The partisans destroyed the myth of the invincible, fearless Aryan soldier. One thing the Nazis feared most was to be captured by partisans, and Jewish Partisans in particular. The fast-moving partisans did not have detention camps or much sympathy, and captured Nazis were executed—quickly if they were lucky. This applied both ways. Nazis had prison camps of all types, but they executed captured partisans routinely. Even large Nazi contingents became scared and wary of going into towns or regions where the partisans prevailed.

The countries and republics in this area were not unified in their reactions to the main combatants, not knowing whether to fear Russian or German victory more. Some Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian nationalist groups saw an opportunity for independence if they could play Germany and Russia against each



other. As a result, each of these republics had many divergent partisan groups, often with conflicting political affiliations, strategies and goals.

Some anti-Russian groups of resistance fighters first emerged after Russia invaded this region. After Germany attacked Russia, other partisan factions then arose, or some factions changed allegiances or tactics. The fragmentation and confrontation often resembled a civil war more than forces fighting a common external enemy. The many different ethnic nationalities, religions, and political ideologies were often at odds with each other, sometimes violently. The internal skirmishes and fighting did not stop just because an anti-Semitic maniac who intended to liquidate and enslave their entire populations invaded these countries.

Not all the partisans fought the Nazis, and some partisans tried hard to avoid the Nazis to pursue their singular interests. The various partisan groups included many factions of Polish militia, several Ukrainian partisan groups, Jewish Partisans, and Russian Partisans. Only the Russian and Jewish Partisans considered the Nazis their primary enemy. Even the Russians though, who fought the Nazis ferociously, also fought other anti-Communist factions, not always in self-defense. Some of the other 'freedom fighters' openly sided with the Nazis, viewing the Soviet Union as their primary enemy, in recognition of Stalin's well-known aspirations for the post-war world. Some partisans actively aided the Nazis, and acted as their police. Hitler took advantage of these rivalries. For example, he promised long-sought independence to the Ukraine after the war was won. The Ukrainian partisans thus became the number-one enemy of the Russian partisans, although Hitler's intent for the Ukrainians was very far from freedom.

Most of these groups initially consisted of very parochial units with a single bonding factor. Most were therefore single-nationality, single-religion, or single-ideology (leftist or rightist) entities. Eventually, more diverse and assorted alliances evolved as the war progressed. In addition, various bands of self-styled independent 'freedom fighters', as well as plain-old terrorists, bandits, and murderous gangs roamed the forests. Some of these groups mostly fought each other, even if they were of the same nationality. The forest region became a merciless and hostile jungle.

Rubin and Ida fought in the region of Eastern Europe where they had lived, in the area of Belarus close to the borders of Poland and Lithuania. They initially joined the Russian Partisans, as these were the only ones who gave Jews a chance, a chance to live a little longer so they could fight before they died. The Russian Partisans had the strongest military organization in the region by far, an outcome of the short-lived Red Army military occupation of this area. Later, Rubin and Ida joined an all-Jewish Partisan 'family camp' detachment that was also under the overall command of the Russian military, as virtually all the Jewish groups were by that time. In this family camp, the entire Kozlowski family was united for the first time in years.

There is now a Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation that teaches and keeps the memory of resistance, bravery, and accomplishments alive.

<https://www.jewishpartisans.org/what-is-a-jewish-partisan>



## Polish Partisans

*Polish Partisans were fundamentally anti-Semitic, never took any steps to save Jewish lives, and were a continual menace to Jewish Partisans or any other Jew who crossed their path. Rubin encountered Polish Partisans primarily after liberation from the Nazis, when the Polish Partisans again fought the Russian Army.*

The first significant partisan activity in this region came from Polish underground fighters who opposed Germany and Russia after their joint invasion. Most of the partisans were of course the remnants of the Polish Army. Eventually, Polish resistance groups included numerous factions, broken down along religious, political, and nationalistic lines. These included the 'White Poles', the People's Guard, the Home Army, independent partisans, and others. After Germany attacked Russia, many of these Polish groups continued to oppose both Germany and Russia, viewing both countries as unwelcome enemies. Other Poles sided with one or the other of the major antagonists. Poles who feared that the Nazis would kill them, for whatever reason, or who were pro-Communist, often joined the Russian Partisans. Some Polish fighters were openly pro-Nazi only because of their overriding and historical hatred of Russia.

For the most part, Polish Partisans were fundamentally anti-Semitic, never took any meaningful steps to save Jewish lives, and were a continual menace to Jewish Partisans and other Jews. Modern, pre-War anti-Semitism was actually more pervasive in many parts of Poland, and other countries such as Austria and the Ukraine, than in Germany. When the Polish Partisans found Jews who escaped mass killings, they would kill them or send them back to the Nazis. Some Polish underground militias existed for the sole purpose of killing Jewish civilians hiding in the forests, actually spending all their time hunting for Jewish Partisans or escapees from the ghettos or camps. They should have fought so daringly against Germany!

The fact that some Jews welcomed Russian occupation as the alternative to the Nazis did not help the Jews after Russia retreated. Some Jews had Communist leanings and were vocal about their politics. The Nazis exploited this in propaganda associating all Jews with Communists, knowing that the Polish people were receptive to such poison. Many Poles used these excuses to attack all Jews, often encouraged by the Christian clergy. In addition, during the Russian occupation some Jews who were previously denied employment opportunities became functionaries of the new regime, a fact resented by the Poles. In effect, the nationalistic and anti-Semitic Polish Partisans wound up fighting the Nazis, the Russians, and the Jews at the same time. Because of this, the Soviet military routinely ordered the partisan units under its command to attack Polish Partisans.

The Polish Partisans known as White Poles were reasonably well organized and strong. They were the main militia operating on their native soil that also had significant remnants of a real army: officers, training, and weapons. They were the only partisans in Poland who received nearly complete cooperation from the local populace, and were able to function out of cities and villages. The Poles had real centers of operations, in buildings rather than bunkers and tents, and did not have



to keep on the move. Many Polish Partisans were only 'part-time' fighters, and would carry on normal lives until they received word of a military operation. After the operation, they returned to their daily lives, disrupted by the war as they were.

The major Polish Partisan groups, and especially the Home Army, were theoretically under the authority of the Polish Government-in-Exile. However, in the initial stages of the war the exiled Polish government was in disarray, and had the severe disadvantage of being located in London. Because of the enmity between Russian and Polish Partisans, cooperation between the two groups was spotty during most of the war and especially so early on. In fact, one of the early assignments that the Polish Government-in-Exile gave to the Polish Partisans was to undermine and contain Russian power. Russia was still the former occupying force, and could be the potential occupier again when the war ended. Russia certainly did not make many Polish friends, other than Polish Communists, during its harsh occupation of Poland. Polish hostility towards Russia continued throughout much of the war, and the Russian Partisans did not cooperate with any of the Polish groups. Many contacts between these groups ended in arguments, fights, or even gun battles.

The Home Army did not spend much time fighting the Nazis, purposefully saving themselves and their significant armaments until the war started to wind down. Although there were some publicized exceptions, the Home Army did not accept Jews because of widespread anti-Semitism in its ranks. Some units of the Home Army took it upon themselves to hunt and kill Jews. Later, it became known that some Jews served in the Home Army under assumed Polish identities, and a very few Jews were prominent officers in Polish groups. Perhaps they did this to be able to better fight the Nazis, or viewed their survival chances in the Polish partisans as better than in the ghettos or in the initially weak Jewish Partisans. The Home Army did offer some meager assistance to Jewish groups and helped some Jews escape from the ghettos, but never provided the arms that the ghetto fighters and partisans really needed. Guns were more valuable than food. A ghetto fighter would pay 30,000 rubles for a gun, equivalent to three times a doctor's annual income.

Other than some exceptions, Jewish Partisan groups were never under Polish control because the Poles were too anti-Semitic to be trusted for such an alliance. The main exception was in the Communist-oriented "People's Guard", which had associations with several Jewish Partisan units. The People's Guard was in sharp conflict with the more numerous non-Communist Polish groups. Still, Jewish acceptance mostly depended on the goodwill of the local commander. In later years Polish apologists tried to glorify the role Jews played in the Polish Partisans, and downplayed the anti-Semitic activities of the Poles.

Rubin and Ida never personally encountered Polish Partisans until after liberation from the Nazis. By then, the Nazis were gone, but the Polish Partisans continued their struggle against Russia, trying to forestall Communist domination of Poland. At that time, Rubin was serving in the Russian Army, rounding up draft evaders, and fighting against insurgents and Polish Partisans, who remained a menace to Jews.



## Russian Partisans

*The Russian Partisans were almost as disciplined as the regular army. They blew up railroads, bridges, telegraph lines, supply depots, and ambushed Nazi patrols. They accepted Jewish recruits if they were young, had weapons, and were willing to die for the chance to kill Nazis.*

The soldiers of the retreating Russian Army formed the most effective partisan force in Eastern Europe. These men had the most rigorous military training, and were committed to destroying the Nazis. The initial intent of the former Russian soldiers who found themselves behind the front lines was only to escape death. Many of them fled to the forests in small groups, buried their uniforms and weapons, and did not plan to form any organized resistance. Some tried to pass as Polish farmers, but were soon found out. Some soldiers at first surrendered to the Nazis, expecting to be put into POW prisons under the Geneva Convention's 'Rules of War'. However, it did not take long for word to spread that the Nazis were not following any rules, but were executing Russian POWs. Those Russians actually sent to POW camps were intentionally starved to death or died of exposure in open-air concentration camps. This was a mistake on the part of the Nazis, as the Russians stopped surrendering and started fighting. Soon, they found themselves fighting constantly in order to stay alive. Russian Partisans did not generally go out of their way to save Jews, as this was not part of their military objectives. However, for the most part they did not waste their time hunting for Jews to kill.

Stalin quickly recognized the military benefits he could reap from this trained army already located behind the front lines. The extremely nationalistic Russian soldiers were brutal towards the Nazis, as the Nazis were razing their beloved motherland and killing millions of Russians. Stalin decided to utilize not only Russian Partisans, but also any other fighters he could get under Russian command. He started to organize these groups through his regular military organization, assigning high-level army commanders specifically assigned to guerrilla operations, and this effort was rapidly escalated. Before this discipline was put in place, many of the Russian partisans were ineffective, small, uncoordinated groups with no clear military objectives. Some of the early guerrilla groups were nothing more than roving bands of deserters or bandits, who used the pretext of being partisans to steal, get drunk, or kill. Between these gangs and the numerous antagonistic factions, anarchy prevailed in the woods.

Under Russia's strict command, order was restored and the fighters became almost as disciplined as the regular army. Every day, groups of men set out for pre-planned missions against the Nazis. They blew up railroads, bridges, telephone and telegraph lines, and supply depots. They ambushed patrols, they raided garrisons, and they collected as much ammunition and supplies as possible from raids and defeated Nazis. Early in the war, the partisans were terribly short of all supplies, but as the value of the partisans became recognized Russia started to reinforce them with supplies. Even with more munitions, however, the missions were dangerous, and the partisans did not have the ordnance and number of troops the Germans had. Life expectancy of the partisans was short. Each day, only a fraction of the men leaving for missions returned alive.



The official name for a Russian Partisan unit was *otriad*, pronounced *atrád* or *autrad*. To be considered an *otriad* and receive Russian material and organizational support, partisan groups had to operate under the Russian military command, rather than as just independent fighters. *Otriads* had officers responsible for security, supply, political training, morale, and liaison for contacts with the local population and other partisan groups. The *otriads* were subdivided into between two and eight platoons or companies of 20 to 40 men each, with specific functions such as explosives or reconnaissance. Medical units were composed of doctors, nurses or medics, but not every *otriad* was lucky enough to have adequate medical support. Most *otriads* numbered between 80 and 150 people, sometimes as much as several hundred. Many partisan *otriads* started out as small groups of a handful of men, and grew as they combined forces with other units, as more individuals joined them, or as the Russian military commanders ordered them to accept recruits, combine with other groups, or otherwise re-organize. A partisan brigade consisted of three or more *otriads*, with up to 1,000 men.

The *otriad* commander issued orders, planned missions, and allocated supplies, food, medicine and ammunition. The commander was also responsible for re-assigning or transferring partisans, who were not free to come-and-go or change units without permission. The commander also settled official disputes and grievances that were brought to him. Unofficial or personal disputes were often handled individually within the *otriads*, often through violence. Russian Partisan detachments also had a senior political officer, the same as Russian Army units. The purpose of the political officer was to educate the troops on Communist ideals and to raise their morale through motivational speeches, and of course to fight. The *Otriad* commanders received news from the Russian front via radio, and it was read aloud every morning. Rules were upheld strictly, and military justice was administered swiftly and unsympathetically. People who fell asleep on guard duty were executed after a quick court-martial trial. Fighters who lost their gun in battle were executed, assuming they dared return without a replacement. The Russian Partisans did not tolerate insubordination, renegades, deserters, thieves, or dissenters, and the punishment for such actions was execution.

With few exceptions, Russian Partisan groups took in only young men with fighting ability, and only those with guns. Most Russian Partisan units were highly mobile, and camps were moved frequently in order to escape detection and attack. Children and the elderly were considered a special burden because they decreased the mobility, and hence security, of the unit. Women were accepted if they served a function such as nurses, doctors, radio operators, or kitchen staff. Commanders also took in some young women to serve their 'personal purposes'. Many young women actually chose older and more senior officers to be with because of the security they provided in this brutal environment, and some of these relationships resulted in marriage.

The Russians generally frowned upon Jewish-only or any other single-nationality units, as these often had personal and political objectives that conflicted with Russia's goals. Over time, the Russians tried to integrate such units. A major exception was the large all-Jewish 'Bielski's *otriad*', which was not only a single-



religion group, it was also a 'family unit'. As a family camp that included infants, women, old people, and men with no fighting ability, it was not mobile, and kept its sanctuary intact by locating itself deep in the forests, surrounded by other fighting units that acted as a security barrier. Because of its unique contributions to the Russian partisans and military, and the persuasiveness of its leader, it remained a single-religion family unit even when it eventually became an official Russian *otriad*.

The Russian Partisans were generally accepting of Jewish fighters, as long as it served their purpose. For one thing, since the Russian Army had Jewish officers as well as soldiers, some of the Russian Partisan units had Jewish members from the start. The number of Jewish officers was over 4% of the total, disproportionately high because Russian Jews were often better educated than non-Jews, and Jews played key roles in the formation of the Red Army. It did make it easier that the Russians trusted Jews because there was virtually no chance that any Jew would be a German collaborator or spy. With the Poles, even those who volunteered to join the Russians, collaboration and betrayal were common enough to be of regular concern. Some Poles were 'drafted' into the partisans, and these proved to be passive, unenthusiastic, and untrustworthy fighters.

The Red Army officially suppressed anti-Semitism within its ranks and its partisan units. However, regulations or not, some Russians were openly anti-Semitic because of deep-rooted bigotry. Sometimes, hatred of Jews outweighed hatred of Germans. In some Russian units, Jewish fighters no doubt had a harder time, were picked on, received the worst choice of weapons or supplies, or were even shot by their 'comrades' during the heat of words or battle. Some Russian units had two rifles for each fighter, and still would not give any weapon to a Jew. In some cases, Jewish Partisans were executed for minor infractions for which their non-Jewish comrades were given light punishment. Many times, anti-Semitic feelings may have been moderated to assure group solidarity, especially if there was a strong commander. In some cases, Jewish Russian soldiers did not openly disclose their Jewish identity because of this latent anti-Semitism.

However, Jewish devotion and fervor often became apparent when Jewish Russian soldiers came upon groups of Jews in the forests. The fearful Jews were easily recognizable because of their dress, desperate conditions, and of course, their Yiddish. Jewish Russian soldiers embraced these Jews like long-lost relatives, kissing and hugging them as if though they were all the last Jews remaining alive, which they may have truly believed.

The practical Russian Partisans did not help Jews solely to allow survival or escape. Their only purpose was to recruit bodies to fight the Nazis. If an escaped Jew reached a Russian camp, they would evaluate him on how useful he would be. If it was a young man that could fight, and if he had a gun, he was usually accepted. Older people, women and children were only a liability and burden—and more so if Jewish. They would require food, clothing, attention, and other scarce resources. They were habitually sent away, and not accepted into any of the non-Jewish Partisans. To Jews who escaped into the inhospitable forests, rejection by the Russian Partisans often meant death.



Jews who escaped from the ghettos and joined Russian units had to demonstrate their worth repeatedly, and were generally not readily accepted as equals by the Russians. Jewish Partisans often had to bear derision and contempt, and always had to prove that they were willing to sacrifice themselves—to die fighting. When joining, they were regularly asked the same question: “What do you want to do in the partisans?” The expected response was “I want to die fighting the Nazis.” Jewish Partisans were not suicidal, but they truly expected to die—and most did. The young Jews recognized that their chances of survival were low. More than half of the Jewish Partisans in Eastern Europe died: 30,000 to 50,000 people.

By late 1942, Stalin appointed a military commander whose sole responsibility was partisan activities. Russia formed a ‘partisan school’ that taught guerrilla fighting tactics, explosives, sabotage, forest survival, and even how to build camouflaged bunkers. Of the 1,000 students at this school, 100 were Jewish. To build up strength, the Russian Partisans adopted a more liberal recruitment policy. With these changes, the plight of Jewish Partisans took a general turn for the better, but as always, new problems arose. Poles were now being more readily accepted into Russian *otriads* if they chose to join. As the Nazis started losing battles, German loyalists, and Ukrainian and Lithuanian collaborators joined the partisans so they would be on the ‘right side’ when the war ended. Therefore, while Jews were becoming better received, so were men with anti-Semitic inclinations, and being an anti-Semite was no reason to reject a recruit. In addition, by this time, the brutal treatment of the Nazis towards the Jews became evident, and so more Jews took the risk and escaped to join the partisans. This influx of Jews into the *otriads* was accompanied by increasing manifestations of anti-Semitism. When the Germans stepped up their periodic anti-partisan attacks, the partisans encountered heavier losses. The Russians reverted to their typical scapegoat behavior, and blamed the Jews for their problems. In some cases, Russians in need of weapons took them from their Jewish comrades. In sum, while Jews were being accepted, many factors were increasing anti-Semitism within the Russian Partisan ranks.

On the Eastern Front, the partisans did huge damage to the Nazi war effort, especially in view of their relatively small numbers and lack of heavy weaponry. During one period, the Germans lost over hundreds of miles of tracks and 1,000 trains a month to partisan actions. The entire Russian Partisan movement in Eastern Europe is estimated to have numbered only 30,000 people in January 1942. By June 1944, two and a half years later, there were 175,000 partisans fighting in the forests. By this time, hundreds of thousands of partisans had already died. The total number of people who served in the Russian Partisans has been estimated at approaching half-a-million between 1942 and the end of 1944. The attrition rate, or more accurately death rate, for partisans was 35% to 60%, meaning that roughly one-half of the partisans died in action. Some partisan units were completely wiped out, others lost so many fighters that they disintegrated into small frenetic groups. The dying did not stop with liberation. As the Germans fled the Russian counteroffensive, the partisans were disbanded and immediately drafted into Russia’s Army. Many Jewish Partisans who survived the mass killings, the ghettos, and fighting in the forests were killed while serving in the Red Army.



## Ukrainian Partisans

*Ukrainian, Lithuanian and other non-German 'Partisan' units often aided the Nazis in their genocidal war against the Jews, and were often as much an enemy as the Nazis.*

Like the Poles, the Ukrainians had numerous underground militia factions, each with their own agenda. Bands of Ukrainian Partisans, Insurgent Army units, militia, police units, 'freedom fighters' (actually terrorists), and other Ukrainian groups roamed the entire area, including territories outside of the Ukraine. A main common feature of these Ukrainian bands was their traditional hatred of Jews, Poles, and Russians. Many Ukrainians openly sided with Germany, resenting the economic, religious, and political hardships Russia had historically imposed on the Ukraine. One of the reasons they were active in areas outside of the Ukraine itself is that the Ukrainians proved to be so viciously anti-Semitic that the Germans gave the Ukrainian Partisans and 'volunteers' almost unbounded autonomy. The *Einsatzgruppen* were always understaffed for their mass killings in any case, and needed non-German participation, a job well-suited to the Ukrainian mindset. The Nazis even formed a Ukrainian SS division by the name of SS Galizien. The Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka, Belzec and other concentration camps had Ukrainian guards. Repeating their barbaric history from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ukrainian killings of Jews were often so inhuman, sometimes using swords, axes, and knives, that even ruthless Nazi commanders became disgusted watching the atrocities.

For various reasons, anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in Ukrainian history. The Ukraine was originally populated by runaway feudal serfs, and they were never a free people until modern times. The Goths, Huns, Mongols, and other hordes invaded the Ukraine over earlier centuries, and the region later came under Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian rule. The victimized populace lived under perennial harsh and cruel conditions, which made them unrelentingly vindictive. Ukrainians were traditionally deeply religious, and their Greek-Orthodox clergy was vocally and actively unsympathetic to their perceived enemies and other religions.

Ukrainian pogroms against Jews were common even when times were peaceful in neighboring lands, and even while the ruling authorities were encouraging Jewish settlement to help build the economy. The nationalistic Ukrainians did not appreciate the Jews bringing alien languages with them—be it Polish, Russian, or Yiddish. Anti-Semitism was openly expressed over the ages in Ukrainian folk songs, literature, history books, 'science' texts, and politics. Major political parties were founded on openly anti-Semitic platforms. The Ukrainians nationalists saw the war as an opportunity for long-sought independence, and viewed minorities and foreign ethnic groups as obstacles.

In the fanciful belief that if they could free the entire Ukraine of Polish and Jewish influence they would easier achieve independence after the war, Ukrainian nationalist partisans sought out and murdered Poles and Jews. They tried to avoid fights with Russian Partisans whenever possible, especially in the early days when they believed Hitler would win the war. The killings of Jews intensified after 1943, when the Ukrainian nationalist started to believe Hitler might actually lose the war.



Russia fought these pro-Nazi Ukrainians with partisan troops and special forces, with the intent of eliminating any nationalistic opposition to Communism and Soviet rule. Perhaps the only small bit of good that came out of the ferocious Ukrainian antagonism towards Jews and Poles was that it promoted some measure of mutual assistance between these two persecuted groups in the Ukrainian territory. There are several recorded instances of ethnic Polish groups and individuals hiding and helping Jews in the Ukraine, and no doubt Jews who escaped from ghettos and survived in the forests here were probably aided by some helpful non-Germans.

In Lithuania and Byelorussia, Ukrainian units liquidated ghettos, guarded death trains, and traveled with the Nazis. Rubin and Ida often wound up fighting the local Lithuanian and Ukrainian para-military units in addition to the Nazis. Many of these fighting units were composed of notorious Nazi collaborators and volunteers, sent into Belarus because the Nazis were short-handed. The Nazis viewed it as a bonus that non-Germans did the killing, thereby implicating themselves in their war crimes. These units were very willing to do the Nazi's killings, and to "purify" locales of Jews. No doubt some Ukrainian Partisans also fought the Nazis, but self-serving accounts notwithstanding, the Ukrainian record in this area is not complimentary to this country and its people.

The Lithuanian and Latvian Republics also had their own freedom fighters. The situation was similar to that in the Ukraine, although these two areas were historically not as anti-Semitic or barbaric as the Ukraine. While there is only sparse information about actual partisan resistance against the Nazis by the Lithuanian and Latvian underground, there is substantial evidence about their collaboration with the Nazis. Lithuanian and Latvian 'partisans', 'kommandos' and auxiliary or 'order' police took part in killing of Jews side-by-side with the Nazis who invaded their land. Enthusiastic and willing Lithuanian 'police' took part in the mass killings around Iyve and Ivenets, doing the Nazi's dirty work while the Nazis largely looked on approvingly. These 'partisans' also used whatever opportunities were presented to attack other ethnic or imagined non-Jewish enemies. Lithuanian partisans brought into Belarus to assist the Nazis often wound up attacking Byelorussian Gentiles, plundering and killing Jews and non-Jews alike. When the Soviet Army liberated this area most of these 'freedom fighters' fled to Germany, often being put into the DP camps with their Jewish victims.



## The Jewish Partisans

*Jewish Partisans were mostly young people who escaped from the ghettos, slave labor camps, or death camps. They fought to avenge the death of their families and to save other Jewish lives. For the Jewish fighters, death lurked everywhere, and they expected to die each day.*

The Jewish Partisans fought to survive and to damage the enemy in whatever ways they could. They were the only partisans who actively tried to save lives—the lives of fellow Jews. The Jewish Partisans had the least training, the fewest weapons, and the least support from the local populace of any of the resistance fighters. A few Jewish Partisans were even known to carry wooden ‘intimidation weapons’—carved wooden rifles or guns fabricated to fool a distant enemy, or to use to obtain a real weapon. In addition, many Jewish fighters had families to consider, who would be killed if the Nazis discovered that a family member joined the partisans.

There were several distinct types of Jewish Partisan groups: (1) all-Jewish fighting-only units, (2) all-Jewish ‘family’ units, and (3) Jewish Partisans serving in Russian Partisan units, which were always fighting-only units. Fighting-only units had mostly armed men and a few women serving special functions. The all-Jewish ‘family units’ included fighters, non-fighters, and their relatives. All these groups included a significant portion of fighting men, as force was necessary to provide protection and obtain food. Some family partisan units were large, numbering in the hundreds, but most groups were much smaller. As the war progressed and coordination between partisan units increased, even the family units became more aggressive.

Isolated families who hid in the woods, sometimes for years, just trying to evade capture and stay alive were not considered partisans. Interestingly, the families that did best in the forests were not the big-city people, but the Jews from the small villages and *shtetlach*, who were often physically stronger and more adept and knowledgeable about rural life. Jewish Partisans in any of these groups always had a unique mission not shared by the Russian or Polish Partisans. Many of them tried to save Jewish lives by bringing Jews out of the ghettos and work camps, especially when it became obvious that total liquidation was imminent. In numerous cases, Jewish Partisans would sneak into ghettos to warn Jews, prepare escapes, bring weapons, or lead Jews to safety. Without such help, many Jews would not have taken the chance to escape the ghetto into the hostile forests. Rubin and his comrades helped many family members, friends, and strangers escape to safety.

Jewish partisans also had another distinct mission not shared by other partisans—personal revenge. While the Russians were brutal toward the Nazis because their beloved homeland was being razed, there was no widespread intense sense of personal retribution. Of all the partisans, the Germans and their cohorts expected the harshest treatment from Jewish partisans. Many Jewish fighters questioned captured prisoners as to which villages or towns they had occupied, fought in, or were stationed at. If the prisoner was in any way familiar with the Jewish partisan’s home village or town, where in almost all cases the partisan’s family members had been killed, revenge would be particularly ferocious.



For the most part, Jewish Partisans had little military experience compared to the Russian or Polish soldiers who formed the core of their respective partisan units. Mostly, the Jewish 'fighters' were young men who escaped from the ghettos, labor camps, or deportations to death camps. Unless these men had military training in the Russian or Polish army, these youngsters learned basic military skills only after they joined the partisans. These 'fighters' were former students, teachers, or artisans, more familiar with the Torah or fabrics than with weapons. By 1942, as the Nazi mass killings left few options, there were numerous Jewish Partisan groups in all the regional forests because of the increasingly desperate escapes.

Photos of these partisans groups show the ragtag nature of these fighters, wearing whatever shabby clothing they escaped with. Boots were often in short supply, and some desperate partisans made makeshift shoes out of bark, rags, and string. Some clothes were made from captured German uniforms, re-sewn to look non-German so that their own comrades would not shoot them. Jewish Partisans usually did not carry any identifying papers. If identifying documents were found on a captured or dead partisan, the Gestapo would arrest and then kill their families. Some Jewish Partisans carried false identity cards, so if caught they could try to supply a credible story. Rubin carried no identifying papers at any time.

In the area in which Rubin and Ida fought, there were two major groups of Jewish Partisan family units. These groups took in and actively sought out unarmed Jewish men, women, older people, and children. Non-Jews who were part of a Jewish family also joined these groups. Initially small, these groups grew rapidly in numbers. Because they had so many non-fighters, and their primary objective was to save lives, these groups initially concentrated on getting essential supplies and defensive military operations. The Bielski *otriad* was the largest and best-known group, which came to be called the Bielski 'detachment' or brigade as it grew to over 1,200 people. The other major Jewish unit, the Zorin *otriad*, was made up of over 600 people. The Zorin *otriad* was considered weaker and "poorer" than the Bielski *otriad* in terms of size, weapons, and capabilities. Its commander Zorin was an active Communist even before the war, and so the Russians initially supported Zorin's group more actively than they did Bielski's unit. As Bielski's group became more valuable, the Russians treated it better. In addition to these large *otriads*, there were numerous smaller Jewish units, literally hundreds. Late in the war, Rubin and Ida transferred to the Bielski detachment so their family could be united.

The Russian command never totally accepted independent Jewish Partisan units, which had objectives other than just fighting the Germans. Some Russian *otriads* had as many as 20% Jewish men, former Russian soldiers, who sometimes experienced habitual anti-Semitism within their own units. To the extent that such persecuted Jewish fighters sought out the Bielski *otriad*, or requested permission to leave the Russian units, or were a source of friction in a situation that was extremely tense at best, it weakened the fighting ability of the Russians. The Russians expected their Jewish comrades to fight alongside them while accepting anti-Semitic behavior. It was common for Russians to assail Jewish groups to obtain their valuable weapons. This happened to Ida's younger brother Joe, when he had just joined the partisans.



As far as women were concerned, Russian and Jewish Partisan units alike welcomed nurses, medics, cooks, or other women who could perform useful functions. Jewish women, especially single women, naturally sought out the Jewish units. Non-fighting, single Jewish women were truly safe from 'predators' only in the Jewish family camps, and even here, young single girls had a tough time.

Partisan units of any significant size gave themselves identifying names. While the Russian units often adopted politically motivated names, Jewish Partisan unit names were often more descriptive of their temperament. For example, the names of the Jewish units formed by the youths who escaped from the Vilna ghetto included "Vengeance", "Victory", and "Death to Fascism". Russian Partisans and villagers who were not aware of these all-Jewish units were often surprised when they encountered them. They were surprised that any Jews survived the Nazi slaughter, and they were surprised that Jews were capable of being fierce fighters rather than meek victims.

Locals often betrayed Jewish Partisans to the Germans, especially at the outset of the war. They did this either because of anti-Semitism or in exchange for trifling goods: a Jew could be worth two pounds of salt or sugar, or a few cigarettes. Later, as the Jewish Partisans meted out swift and public retribution to collaborators and anti-Semitic locals, such dangers from the local peasants were greatly reduced. In fact, the locals often quickly switched allegiance to the Jewish Partisans or whoever else was the dominant power in the region. When Rubin and his units would commandeer wagonloads of food from local hostile villages for their own unit's use, they would always try to take extra food to distribute to friendly villages.

In early operations, Jewish partisans who did not have explosives tried to sabotage Germans trains by dismantling the tracks manually, a futile and mostly unsuccessful gesture. Once proper munitions were obtained, the partisan operations resulted in significant material damage. In 1944 alone, Jewish Partisans in Eastern Europe destroyed over fifty trains, hundreds of bridges and roads, and hundreds of miles of railroad track. Many Nazis died in these raids. It would be an exaggeration to say that these brave young Jewish fighters changed the length or outcome of the war, or won great battles. They did disrupt, destroy, kill, frustrate, and humiliate the Nazis, as did the ghetto resistance fighters. More importantly, the Jewish Partisans resisted the slaughter, and brought some measure of fear and justice to Nazis and collaborators. They demonstrated a courageous fighting spirit in the face of crushing odds, and the determination to exact whatever revenge and retribution they could before the deaths they all believed they would encounter shortly.

More than half of the Jewish resistance fighters in Eastern Europe died, estimated at 30,000 to 50,000 dead. In the words of historians Eckman and Lazar, the Jewish Partisans "were alone in their catastrophe and unique in their heroic stand." Writer Shmuel Krakowski entitled his account of the Jewish Partisans' struggle as "The War of the Doomed." Jewish partisans felt as if though they were fighting against the whole world, against everybody—because they were.



## Partisan Life in the Forests

*The dense and swampy forests were the bastions of the partisans. They lived in bunkers dug into the earth, camouflaged to avoid detection by Nazis, airplanes, and local peasants. Escape to the forests did not equate to survival, and many Jews never lived to get out of the forests.*

The large and dense forests of Belarus, stretching for dozens of miles, were ideal bastions for the Russian and Jewish partisans. The growth was sometimes so thick and impenetrable that no tank, jeep, or even horse could pass. The forests were beautiful but intimidating, as a person could walk 50 feet and become completely lost. The Nazis would generally not enter these forests unless in tremendous force, and accompanied by the locals who knew the forests. Even when compared to the many primeval forests of Belarus, the Nalibocka forest near the namesake town of Nalibocki has been described as a hostile wasteland, or swampy jungle, rather than woodland. This large area was situated halfway between Minsk and Lida, just west of Ivenets and south of Vilna. The Bystra River flows east-to-west through the middle of the forest, and the Berezina River runs along its northern edge. Many areas were barely penetrable by humans, as marshes, wild brush, tightly packed swamp grasses, and tough vines made even foot passage difficult. Some of the trees were so large that a circle of bark taken off a single tree could serve as a bunker's roof. The swampy terrain was a breeding ground for snakes and swarms of biting insects. The terrain, lakes, and marshes made natural defensive barriers.

There were some villages at the edges of the forests, and a few barely accessible smaller villages or isolated huts within the forest. Some Jewish families escaped death by hiding in these isolated huts or other hidden dens during much of the war. Ida's mother, father, and her young sister Gloria spent over one-and-a-half years in an unfinished house deep in the woods, memorable because it had no windows. Another such family was that of Dinah Magids, who later married Ida's brother Joe Kozlowski. Dinah's family hid in several bunkers deep in the forests for almost two years. In both cases, these families with young children would not have been accepted in any fighting partisan units, and the all-family units were not known or active in all regions. These hideouts and bunkers were perilous and intimidating places, with starvation, freezing temperatures, and betrayal by paid informants and hostile peasants constant worries.

In the initial months of partisan activity, the Nalibocka guerrilla fighters were no more than scattered groups of Russian soldiers hiding from the Nazis and collaborators. There was no communications or coordination between the disorganized groups, and infighting between partisan units was common. Food was always in short supply, and it was difficult to keep warm in the frigid winters while hiding from Nazis and locals. The weather was often so cold that trees split from the cold, and birds froze and fell out of the trees. Boots were valuable commodities, and many partisans and innocent civilians died because another person wanted his boots. Boots were often taken off the feet of dead enemy fighters. The groups possessed some horses, but not enough to meet their needs. The horses were used mainly for transportation, but a horse could also serve as food.



Food shortages were a constant concern in the forests, but guns and ammunition were more important and scarcer. In many partisan units, the number of men was always greater than the number of weapons, sometimes less than one weapon for ten fighters. Weapons were taken off dead soldiers, bought or bartered from villagers, or stolen. In the early days of the war, weapons could readily be found in the forest, where fleeing Russian soldiers had discarded them. Weapons were so valuable that loss of a gun was a capital offense in the Russian Partisans, punishable by death. In Rubin's unit, each fighter had a gun, but no one was given more than 50 bullets unless armed for a specific mission. If a fighter was wounded and could not use his weapon, he had to surrender it to another fighter. Later in the war, the Red Army supplied weaponry to the Russian and even Jewish Partisans who were under Russian command.

The location of the partisan camps was changed often, especially if danger of detection was feared. Forest camps were camouflaged to prevent detection by spies, hostile civilians, antagonistic partisans, and airplanes. Some camps were nothing more than tent-like structures, which were also used when partisans were on the move or on patrol. The tents were made of inter-locked wooden branches onto which sheets were placed to form a roof. More permanent base camps had camouflaged underground bunkers that served as living quarters and protection from the elements. Most bunkers held no more than about 40 people in order to avoid large-scale slaughter in case of detection, even when the partisan unit was larger. If Nazis found a bunker, they blew it up with grenades, trying to bury the partisans alive. Another practical limit was the physical size of the structure itself.

The name for such a permanent, hidden bunker was '*ziemlanka*', derived from the Russian word for soil. It was a dug-up plot of earth, with the top third camouflaged with branches, plants and even trees, to form a rounded or pyramidal berm or mounded shape that gave protection from cold, rain and snow. The roof was never 100% waterproof, and the sunken floor often became sodden in rainy weather. The bunker was at least two-thirds underground. Entry into the bunker was via hidden ladder or stairs to a highly camouflaged narrow door or small opening, sometimes hidden in a pit. Some entrances were through hollow trees or branch thickets, or even through water wells that were re-constructed to have vertical tunnels in the side. On snowy days, footprints were obliterated on entry or exit. The inside was nearly six feet high, so people could stand without stooping. The bunker was often lined with logs, with the spaces between logs stuffed with forest moss. The logs were cut hundreds of feet from the bunker so as not to create a visible opening in the forest, and the tree stumps were then covered and camouflaged. Most bunkers had a long wooden platform or section raised two feet off the damp floor, which served as both a table and bed. If available, straw or flour sacks made a scratchy mattress for lucky individuals, who would be truly lucky if their sleeping spot was not under a leaking hole. A metal stove made from a large gasoline barrel was located in the center for heat and cooking, with a camouflaged chimney pipe extending through the roof to allow some smoke to exit. Fires were only built when it was safe for the smoke to escape, most often at night, but damp wood resulted in a smoke-filled bunker. Small air holes and escape holes were also camouflaged. In the best of circumstances, life in the bunker was primitive, damp, and stifling.



In large camps, there was one communal kitchen where meals were cooked for everyone. Cooking pots in these camps were large enough to hold soup for 200 people. Food was whatever was available, or could be scrounged or captured. Partisans might eat only potatoes, beets, or onions for weeks on end, until other food became available. The only difference between morning meals and evening meals was that morning meals were eaten by daylight, and evening meals were eaten in the dark. Horsemeat was a rare delicacy, as horses were necessary to carry men and supplies. Rubin described the taste of horsemeat as tough but sweet. When on the run, muddy drinking water was scooped out of a swampy ditch, or out of an indentation made in the muck by a boot heel. Food was often appropriated at the point of a gun, if necessary. The partisans did not usually go hungry, but the lack of variety and quality led to frequent ailments.

The younger people usually survived forest life with no more than temporary, non-fatal illnesses, aggravated by poor food, frigid winters, and lack of medicine. Influenza (the grippe), pneumonia, scurvy, scabies, rickets, lice, and gum disease were common, as were debilitating insect stings in the swampy areas. Soap was scarce, and campfire ashes were used to wash clothes and bodies. For the rare hot bath, stones were heated in a fire and then thrown into a pool of cold water. To keep warm, the partisans huddled around fires at night, when it was safe to build fires. To sleep in the swampy areas, partisans sometimes tied themselves to branches or to trees and slept standing up to avoid sinking into the mucky ground. Exhaustion, hunger, and fear were with these partisans every day and night.

Life in the forest was hard, and escape to the forests did not equate with survival. In one forest for which figures are available, Poland's Parczew forest, only 4% of Jews who reached the forest lived to see the end of the war. Death occurred by many means: dying in action; capture by Nazis; murder or betrayal by anti-Semitic partisans or peasants; and death from the harsh environment. Many Jews sought out other means of survival because they knew that weaker family members would not survive the hardships and tough living conditions in the forests. Some escapees from the ghettos did find one positive feature of the primeval forests. They found a solitude and privacy that contrasted with the unbelievably crowded ghettos.

The villages in the area were caught between the warring factions. Villages that were at the outskirts or deep in the forest were allied with the partisans, who would protect them. Villages closer to the towns were mostly allied with the Nazis, and villagers would help the Nazis navigate the forest and find partisans. The partisans would deliberately raid such hostile villages for provisions: food, horses, clothes, and weapons. In addition to satisfying their own needs, the partisans would also bring supplies to supportive villages to assure their future cooperation. The villagers had little loyalty to each other. In many cases, partisan groups were re-directed to neighbors who "had more supplies" or "were hiding provisions". Confiscation of luxuries or non-essential items was discouraged by the partisan command, as this was considered looting. The partisans did not kill any villagers unless they put up a fight, or were known collaborators or spies. In such cases, the villager and his family would be killed, and his home or barn burned. This worked very effectively to discourage future collaboration. Life was hard all around.



## RUBIN JOINS THE PARTISANS

*The Russian Partisans accepted Rubin because they believed that this young man, whose family was murdered, was willing to die if given the chance to kill Nazis. Rubin believed that he would not survive the war anyway, and thought only about revenge, not survival.*

In May 1942, Rubin joined the Russian 'Stalin' *otriad*, a group named for Russia's leader. Joe Starkman was already part of this *otriad*. Rubin did not have a rifle, but fortunately, his training in the reserves was valuable, and he easily demonstrated his skills with weapons and explosives. However, the Russians always looked for another factor when considering Jews to join their units. The Russians did not have much faith in the fighting ability of Jews, and believed that this was the reason they were going so meekly to their deaths. However, they knew that some Jews were ready to die for the chance to get revenge. Rubin needed to convince the Russians that he was prepared to fight and sacrifice his life. Jews were always asked: "Why do you want to join the partisans?" The expected answer was: "I want to die killing as many Nazis as possible." Rubin did not hesitate to give this answer.

Rubin had just witnessed the atrocities committed by the Nazis against Jews and against his family. All that he loved was destroyed: his mother, sisters, family, and friends. Rubin believed that the Nazis were killing all of Europe's Jews, maybe all of the world's Jews. He felt that he must leave a mark in history before he died. He wanted to show that Jews could resist, could fight, and could exact justice. He lived only for vengeance, believing that each day would be his last. In his mind, surviving until the end of the war was not even remotely possible. Some of the partisans knew Rubin from his pre-war training. They recognized the intensity of Rubin's desire for revenge, not survival. They knew that such impulsive Jewish survivors were useful. Being nearly suicidal was a desirable character trait as far as the Russians were concerned. The partisans therefore accepted Rubin, even without a weapon. Rubin was 21 years old, and ready to die.

This *otriad* contained 80 men, of which 40 were Jews who escaped from ghettos. There were a few women in this unit, mainly medical or kitchen workers. At that time, Jews from the ghettos were still a rarity in the Russian *otriads*, as the escapes were only starting. The existing Jewish Partisans were mostly former Russian soldiers, who often did not reveal their religion to any of their comrades. The commander of this *otriad* was a decent and fair man named Gulevich, who did not display any anti-Semitism. Ida and Rubin do not know to this day if Gulevich was Jewish—he may have been.

Rubin soon found a discarded rifle in the woods. Rubin also quickly learned to ride a horse, and became an excellent rider. Ida remembers his speed and agility on a horse. Ida was always a reluctant horseback rider. In Rubin's words, "Ida's horse was the boss. It went where it wanted to go." Nevertheless, Ida rode her horse on missions, and to visit her family that was hiding in the woods. Rubin also started to smoke cigarettes, although these were mostly made from dried and crushed leaves, rolled up in whatever scrap paper was around. Rubin's cigarette habit lasted until sometimes into the early 1950s.



This *otriad* was on the move constantly, and changed camp locations almost daily. The group often slept outdoors in makeshift tents, exposed to the elements. If there were no Nazis in the vicinity, a fire could be made for heat and cooking. This unit possessed sufficient rifles, pistols, and grenades to carry out their missions, but ammunition was always scarce. No partisan was issued more than 50 rounds unless going out on a defined mission. There was almost daily fighting with the Nazis or their surrogates. If they were themselves not attacked, the partisans went on ambushes, raids, or supply missions. They would kill Nazis, and partisans would be killed as well—there were no prisoners. In some ways, being killed quickly was a good alternative to torture before death. Some days the partisans were successful in their attacks, killing Nazis and obtaining arms, ammunition, supplies, and food. Other days they lost everything, men, rifles, and horses. The partisans considered just coming back alive from a mission as a victory. Before each mission, Rubin and the other partisans were given their allotment of extra ammunition, plus a half glass of vodka. The vodka warmed them up in the winter and helped to alleviate any inhibitions they may have had in any weather.

Because of his training, Rubin was responsible for preparation and placement of explosives. The people who undertook this dangerous task had to be those who did not care if they lived or died. Dynamite-type explosive charges were hand-made from gunpowder removed from captured or unexploded artillery shells. The explosive charge from the shells was liquefied by immersion in hot water, and then poured into brick-shaped or cylindrical charges weighing about 45 pounds each. Explosive caps and fuses used to detonate the charges were also scrounged from Russian or captured munitions.

In one of Rubin's early missions in 1942, the brigade planned a dangerous and daring raid on the town of Nalibocki, where a Nazi garrison was stationed. This was to be a surprise attack, to obtain weapons, ammunition, and supplies, and of course, to kill as many Germans as possible. Almost the entire brigade was divided into two squads, separate Jewish and Gentile units, with only several men left in the camp. Most of the Jews were from Ivenets, and were under the command of a Jew from Minsk named Zhikonetz. The Jewish commander gathered his fighters before the approaching battle, and exhorted his men to be extra courageous. If they fought bravely, they would be held in higher esteem in the eyes of the Russians, and allowed to bring more Jews into their unit. Rubin was supposed to be in this attack group, but fate kept him out of the action.

The Russian *otriad* commander signaled both groups to attack. The Jewish group attacked first and ferociously, hoping to exceed their commander's expectations. As the battle proceeded, partisan scouts came up from the rear and said that hundreds of Nazi reinforcements were seen leaving Ivenets for Nalibocki. The Gentile partisans retreated, suffering fatalities as they ran. The Jewish fighters then became overwhelmingly outnumbered. They were forced to retreat also, and were pursued through the woods, suffering severe casualties. The mission was a disastrous defeat for the partisans, and the Nazis kept pursuing them through the woods. When the battle ended, every single Jew who had gone out on the mission had been killed, including their commander.



Immediately after the battle concluded, anarchy broke out in Stalin's *otriad*. The defeat and heavy losses led to feuding and dissension among the various factions. Not surprisingly, the Gentile partisans blamed the situation on the seven Jews that remained alive, although they had not even participated in the mission. Rubin had not joined the mission because on the previous day he had walked into a swarm of stinging gnats. This was September 1942, and the swampy forest was swarming with all sorts of flying and stinging bugs. The gnats stung him ferociously, and Rubin's entire leg became swollen so that he could neither walk nor put his boots on. He was therefore unable to join the doomed mission, and was miraculously spared. However, he was not spared the wrath of his Gentile comrades.

The Gentile partisans pointed their rifles at their Jewish comrades, and demanded that they all leave their group. Under threat of death, the Jews were pointed in the direction of the Nazis that had just defeated them. Rubin and the six other Jews headed to the woods around Ivye, a familiar area. There they encountered seven Russian Partisans who had also splintered from their main group. The two small groups realized that individually they were too small to mount meaningful attacks or to defend themselves well. They decided to unite, but even a group of 14 partisans was still highly vulnerable. Left with few alternatives, they executed a series of daring raids on the Nazis and their followers on the outskirts of Ivye. Every day for several weeks, Nazis, Polish policemen, and traitors were attacked and killed. Soon the word was out that there were hundreds of partisans in the woods around Ivye. The Nazis avoided going into the woods, fearing partisan attacks. These 14 partisans were safe for the time being, and soon their unit grew in numbers.

By November, the commander of the group decided it was time to make underground bunkers to serve as a base and shelter during the approaching winter. Following standard procedures, the group split into two to ensure survival of at least part of the group in case the Nazis cornered them while they slept. They were to split into Jewish and Gentile factions, but the two senior Gentile officers unexpectedly decided to bunk with the Jewish group. One officer was named Victor and the other one was Leonard (last names not recalled). Victor had a reputation for impetuosity and bravery. The Nazis had already caught him three times, and he escaped each time. Regrettably, Victor was also a brazen anti-Semite, and it was surprising that he had decided to bunk with the Jews. He would often make anti-Semitic comments, and taunt his Jewish comrades. If a Jewish Partisan prepared a meal for the unit, for example, he would say: "This food has the stink of Jews".

Victor had already lost his wife in the war, and placed his teenage daughter with strangers at a farm. The farmers were being paid money and food to take care of the girl. During his visits, Victor's daughter complained to her father that she was not being treated well. Victor told the partisan group he was planning to kill the farmer's family and burn down their farm because of his daughter's complaints. It turned out that this farmer was the same one who had recently hidden Ida, Marcia, and their friend Frooma when they escaped from the ghetto. Rubin did not think that people who had risked their lives to hide Jews were likely to be mistreating a Gentile girl in their care. Rubin, Joe Starkman, and a few of their Jewish comrades decided to find out more details.



They went to the farm and asked the farmer what the daughter's complaints were. The farmer and his wife said they were treating the girl well, and the youngster was either malicious or just complaining because she did not like staying with strangers. The Jewish Partisans warned the farmer of Victor's stated intent to kill them. Realizing that Rubin and his group were saving their lives, the farmer's wife told Rubin that she had to return the favor. She told him that when Victor visited his daughter, he had told them that he was going to kill all the Jews in his partisan group. His reason was simple—he did not like Jews. This was why he had decided to stay with the Jews, so he could spring a surprise trap on them.

Rubin and his friends developed a plan to deal with this upsetting development. They had to kill Victor before he killed them, but they could not let the other Gentile Partisans in their unit find out. Rubin's assignment was to take Victor and Leonard drinking, knowing that their binge would not stop until they fell into a drunken stupor. The partisans knew several homes in the area at which they could spend several hours drinking vodka in exchange for some favors or goods. After the first few drinks, Rubin started to secretly pour most of the vodka down his shirt so he could stay partially sober. Both Victor and Leonard passed out after drinking several bottles, as they usually did. Rubin then half-carried and half-dragged them back to their bunker. He dropped them on their bunks, still very drunk and still asleep.

Joe Starkman was then supposed to kill Victor, and another one of their group was to kill Leonard. Rubin was anticipated to be too drunk to be of much help, which he was. While the two Russians slept on their bunks, the Jewish Partisans pretended to clean their rifles. At a signal, they each took one shot at Victor and Leonard, and immediately ran out of the bunker. Unbelievably, Joe had missed, and Victor jumped up when he heard the shots. Still drunk, Victor reeled around, grabbed his rifle, and shouted: "Where are the Germans?" He jumped up and stuck his head out of the small escape hole. Joe looked back, realized what happened, and put a single bullet through Victor's forehead. Victor was left hanging in the escape hole, the top of his body drooping down, a bullet in his brain.

The noise and commotion awakened Rubin, and he ran outside. They did not know if Leonard also escaped death, whether he was killed, alive, or wounded. If he was alive and told the other Gentile partisans what Rubin and the others had done, they would all be killed, even if anyone believed that this was preemptive self-defense. They carefully looked into the bunker and saw that Leonard was in the exact place they had laid him and was not moving, but it was still possible that he was pretending to be dead. No one wanted to chance going into the bunker. Rubin put a sharp nail through the end of a long stick and poked Leonard from a protected position. He kept on prodding him, harder each time, trying to get him to move or respond. He jabbed Leonard until the nail drew blood, and still Leonard did not move. He was obviously dead. The Jewish partisans then hid both bodies in an underground pit where they were planning to store meat for the winter. When the partisans got together the next day, the Gentile partisans in the other group asked where Victor and Leonard were. Nobody knew, of course, and the entire *otriad* started "looking for Victor". Rubin and Joe were delighted to join in this hunt for Victor, asking everyone they met if they knew anything about Victor.



In between missions, Jewish Partisans purposefully tracked down anti-Semites and pro-Nazis who killed Jews. In one operation, Rubin and his group went out to find a Polish policeman who had boasted about his killings. Rubin's group pursued him to a *dorf* near Iyve, where a sympathetic villager told them that the fugitive was hiding in a pigsty. Rubin's group found him immersed to his ears in pig excrement. The partisans asked him how many Jews he had killed. At first, he said none, but soon he said "one", and then on further questioning, said "maybe only two". The partisans knew he had killed many, and his fate was sealed. Rubin shot him with an exploding bullet, and this man's head "blew up like a melon smashed to pieces".

At the outset of the war, Russian Partisans sometimes sent captured German prisoners to Soviet prison camps. As the fighting turned more brutal, German wounded and prisoners were more likely to be executed on the spot. Partisans could not spare men to guard prisoners, did not have cells in which to keep them, and in any case, were on the move too much to transport prisoners. If the Germans were ordinary soldiers, quick execution was the best they could hope for. If questioning revealed that the Nazis participated in atrocities, they were dealt with more harshly. Execution or hangings were relatively humane treatments compared to what the Nazis did to captured Partisans. While the Nazis were brutal to all captured partisans, Jewish Partisans were routinely and horribly tortured before being killed. Among the documented tortures perpetrated on Jewish Partisans: breaking of fingers; burning soles of feet; hanging by the scrotum; burning alive; thumbscrews; stretching rack; slow poisoning; tossing into pits of starved wolves; blinding by hot pokers, followed by abandonment in the forest; and electric shock. Women partisan's breasts were amputated.

To a man, captured Nazis knew nothing about mass killings, concentration camps, persecution of Jews, or about any other atrocities. They were all 'family men', loyal soldiers of the Reich, who never killed any Jews, and 'only followed orders.' Searches of these Nazi soldiers sometimes revealed letters of commendation in their packs, often for 'bravery against partisans.' Some Nazis carried souvenir photos of Jewish mass killings, or ghetto persecutions. Such Germans had no chance for leniency. Eventually, all these men of the 'Aryan Master Race' wound up on their knees, lying, pleading, and crying unashamedly for mercy—because they realized that they were dealing with people whose only purpose in life was revenge. Jewish Partisans were brutal to captured Nazis and collaborators, likely more than other partisans, since virtually all of them had lost family members to the Nazis. Some Nazis were forced to dig their own graves before being shot, an ironic role reversal. In one instance, partisans mounted heads of captured Nazis on posts surrounding a town, to instill fright into both Nazis and possible collaborators.

Rubin's explosives group made good and inspired use of their expertise. In one memorable occurrence, his group captured a German soldier after a fierce battle. They questioned him, and he gave unconvincing answers. He must have done or said something to make the partisans angrier than usual. They inserted a dynamite stick into the Nazi's rectum, and lit a long fuse. The partisans backed away and watched the Nazi looking in horror at the burning fuse. The Nazi lost more than his mind, and went all to pieces.



## RUBIN AND IDA SEGALOWICZ IN THE PARTISANS

*Rubin and Ida were married several days after Ida's escape from the Ivye ghetto. Rubin was assigned to demolition teams from the start. This was a most dangerous duty, as many men lost their lives handling and manufacturing the explosives. Ida served as a nurse in a field infirmary, and went out on missions with a medical kit and a rifle.*

After Ida's escape from the Ivye ghetto, and after a series of stops at various safe houses, Rubin took Ida and her best friend Frooma to his partisan group, where it was arranged that both girls would be accepted. Nurses were always in short supply, and Ida was immediately put to work treating wounded and sick fighters.

Several days later, during the bleakest time of their lives, and during the most deadly year in Jewish history, Rubin and Ida were married. There was no Rabbi, but by Jewish law, only two Jewish witnesses are required for a wedding. They exchanged the ancient Jewish marriage vows, and so were legally married in the eyes of the Jewish people. The date was December 25, 1942—or maybe December 26. It may be surprising to think that two people would not remember their exact wedding day, but at that time, nobody watched calendars. They truly lived only to survive. Of what importance is an anniversary date if you thought you would not live to observe even your next anniversary? At their marriage, Rubin was 22 and Ida was 20—but they had already lived a lifetime. Their lives were already full of more turmoil and tragedies than most people experience in a full life span, and they both believed that their lives were nearly over.

There were no relatives present at the wedding. There was no rabbi, no *chupah* (wedding canopy), no band, no dancing of the *horah*, and no written marriage certificate or *ketubah* (wedding contract). There was no wine, and if there was vodka, it was more likely to keep warm than to celebrate. Rubin and Ida did have gold wedding rings though, which they wore through most of their marriage. Many years later, their son Aaron re-melted the well-traveled gold wedding bands into earrings and jewelry for Ida. As soon as the fighting ended in their region, they did obtain civil marriage papers in a municipal court in Ivye. As fate would have it, they then had to discard the papers to hide their nationalities when they traveled across Europe. They later had to obtain another written confirmation of marriage in order to leave the DP camps as husband-and-wife. Some friends acted as witnesses, and they were finally able to keep this documentation of their marriage.

Rubin and Ida of course had no newlywed's honeymoon. As one of three nurses, Ida was very busy treating the wounded and going on missions, sometimes with Rubin's group. She was given a medical kit and a rifle, and sent out on horseback. Many nurses were killed on these operations, as a medic's armband did not stop bullets. From this point until the end of the war, Ida wore only pants, never a skirt or dress. After the war, Ida swore that she would never wear pants again. There is a great photo of Rubin, Ida, Marcia, and Joe in military-style uniforms, taken just after the liberation of Ivye. The 'uniforms' were actually just then-customary civilian clothes, re-sewn from whatever was available, likely army uniforms. The clothes did look military-like, possibly intentionally, to appear more imposing. During their entire time in the partisans, they did not have anything so military-looking.



Ida also worked in the field hospital, assisting the surgeons. The field hospital was a separate '*ziemlanka*' used to treat the wounded, which could hold up to ten patients. Few of the young partisans actually got sick, despite the cold and the poor food, and so most of the patients were those wounded in battle. Medical supplies were very limited. Saltwater was used as an antiseptic, and vodka was used as an anesthetic. Sometimes no anesthetic at all was available. Occasionally, such supplies were captured from the Germans. The few instruments they had were boiled or dipped in vodka for sterilization. Severely wounded partisans who made it back to the hospital generally did not survive. Ida sadly remembers one brave officer with a serious abdomen wound. He was vomiting and bleeding profusely, and Ida held his head to comfort him, knowing that was the best she could do for him. He died as she held him, her tears falling on his face.

Towards the end of the war, the badly wounded were airlifted to Russia for better medical treatment. The partisans of course had no real airfield or paved runway. They made a clearing in a field, which was heavily guarded at all times. Each *otriad* contributed fighters to guard the field at different times. Near the field was a heavily concealed bunker that was used to keep the wounded so they could be quickly loaded onto the airplane. Landings were signaled by fires in prearranged patterns to indicate that conditions were safe. Sometimes airplanes arrived on schedule, and sometimes they did not. Airplanes often circled as they dropped their loads, but did not land for a variety of reasons. When an airplane did land to unload supplies or men, it picked up the wounded for the return trip to Russia.

One person who Ida treated was Chanan Lefkowitz, a close friend from the Iyve ghetto and from the Stalin *otriad*. While recovering from a battle wound in the 'hospital' bunker, he overheard some men talking about an all-Jewish Partisan group. He had not even known that such a Jewish Partisan unit existed. Chanan sought out this Jewish *otriad*, which turned out to be Bielski's detachment. He could not believe that so many Jews were still alive, and had not heard so much Yiddish since he left his home. Chanan had to remain with the Stalin brigade, but wanted to help the Jews in Bielski's *otriad*. In written memoirs, Chanan tells how he sometimes brought extra guns that he obtained during partisan raids to his compatriots in the Bielski camp, which was always short of weapons. Chanan was badly wounded again in late 1943 with a serious abdominal injury, and was airlifted to Moscow. He survived his wounds, and passed away recently in Israel.

Ida went out on many very dangerous missions, and had some very narrow escapes. During one mission that went bad, Ida went out with Rubin's demolition group to their target. It soon started to rain hard, and the rain then began to freeze. At the same time, a troop of Germans stumbled across the partisans, and chased them through the woods relentlessly, for hours. The Germans often came so close that Ida could hear them talking to each other as they stalked the partisans, telling each other where they thought the partisans were hiding. Ida and her group of ten were frantic, thinking the end was near. While fleeing in the freezing rain, they saw an isolated house in the woods, and in desperation took a chance that they would not be killed, turned away, or betrayed. Ida knocked on the door, hoping the woman of the house would take pity on them and give them temporary refuge.



An old Gentile woman opened the door and saw Ida's frozen face. Ida's lips were blue, her face was white as snow, and totally covered with a layer of glistening ice. Ida's clothes were covered in a single layer of ice, and she looked like a glass apparition. The superstitious Gentile must have thought she was looking at a ghost. She repeatedly crossed herself, saying in Polish: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus". She took pity on the group and let them in, but told them that Polish policemen were active in the area. If they were discovered, they would all be killed. The partisans had a warm drink and stood by the fire for several minutes. As soon as they thawed out a bit they left, still wet and freezing, and made their way back to their camp.

In March of 1943, the word was sent out through the forest that the partisans were reorganizing, and that all groups that had separated into fragments should rejoin to strengthen their operations. These small isolated groups were frequently estranged from each other because of differing religions, nationalities, or politics. The Russian Partisan leadership wanted the partisans strengthened in numbers, and organized by territories rather than nationalities or religion. The Russians believed the anti-Semitism, animosities, and divisive feuding between the Polish and Russian Partisans was playing into Hitler's hand. The re-structured partisan organization was to include larger brigades, each with four or five platoons. Each platoon was to have over 200 men, and each platoon was divided into units that had specific functions or missions.

Rubin, Ida, and the rest of their group were assigned to the Suvorov *otriad* of Stalin's brigade. Later, they would be transferred to Zhukov's brigade, which needed nurses. Stalin's brigade had four *otriads*, and Rubin was again placed in the most dangerous unit—the explosives unit. By now, the Germans were guarding the all-important trains and bridges more heavily than before, evidence of the partisan's successes. Twenty-one men were assigned to the explosives unit. They were divided into groups of seven who alternated every third mission. The commander of Rubin's group was David Plotnick, a gutsy Byelorussian Jew from Pinsk who had volunteered for the 'Partisan School' in Moscow. David later received the prestigious Russian "Defense of the Fatherland" medal from Russia. Phillip Kinn, a longtime friend, was also part of this explosives group, and went out with Rubin on many missions. David Plotnick and Phillip (Feiyvel) Kinn and their families remained friends with the Segal family in the U.S. Rosaline, Leon, and Aaron remember both of these men and their families.

Nazis guarding strategic railroad sites were stationed at 50-yard intervals, patrolling the tracks. In preparation for raids, partisans sent scouts to survey the best and safest areas to place the dynamite. Sometimes scouts spent entire nights lying by the tracks to find out when and how often trains and guards passed. Rubin typically waited until the guards were as far away as possible. Then he would crawl on his belly to place a charge under the rails. Each charge consisted of 45 pounds of dynamite. It is likely that Rubin himself weighed no more than 130 pounds at that time. A long detonation string would be uncoiled back to the woods, and the partisans hid, waiting for the train. Other men were stationed deeper in the forest, acting as lookouts and keeping their horses ready.



Rubin often waited for hours until the train arrived, concealed near the tracks. As the train passed, he would pull the string to detonate the explosives. The train derailment and the explosion would usually kill many of the Nazis on board. Such missions were often carried out at night, and the explosions would light up the sky. Inevitably, a barrage of gunfire followed as Nazi soldiers jumped off the train. The partisans would return fire while running into the woods and try to outrun or evade the pursuing Nazis. Partisan scouts would return to the site after the explosion to determine and document the damage, and to bury their dead.

On one of these missions, as Rubin waited for the train to go by, Nazi guards saw one of the explosive charges. They searched the area and spotted the partisans. As they ran down the tracks towards him, Rubin waited for the right moment and unflinchingly pulled the detonator. The dynamite exploded right under the Nazis. Rubin lugged the dead Germans away, replanted more dynamite, and continued waiting for the train, which he successfully blew up.

Rubin and Ida had many friends in this unit, but Ida often speaks most sadly of her very close childhood friend Frooma Tamfel (or Tanfel). Frooma's father was killed in the Ivye ghetto during the first mass killing. Frooma and Ida escaped together from the Ivye ghetto, a terrifying experience that bonded them further. Grief-stricken Frooma joined the partisans with Ida, and worked in the kitchen in the "Suvorov" *otriad*, while her mother and younger sister were hidden with Gentiles. One day Frooma was told that her mother and sister had been discovered by the Nazis, and killed. Her entire family was now gone. Total despair overtook her, and all she wanted was revenge. She obtained brief medic's training, and was given a nurse's kit. She voluntarily went out on the most dangerous missions, hoping for vengeance or a quick end to her torment. On her first few missions, she acted so daringly brave, so uncaring for her safety, that the commander commended her bravery during the daily roll calls. In April 1944, on a major mission, she rushed out under a hail of bullets to retrieve a wounded partisan. A bullet ripped through her heart. The commander wrote a poetic love-song in honor of this brave young 22-year old girl. Ida carried this poem with her for several years, but had to discard it along with all other identifying papers while pretending to be displaced Greek Jews. The poem-song is published in several accounts of the Jewish partisans.

During their years in the forests, Ida, Rubin, and other Jewish partisans never had the opportunity or the desire to observe even one Jewish holiday, even if they would have known when to celebrate it. There was no desire to prepare Shabbat or holiday meals, to pray, or to celebrate, even if the food or time would have been available. There was no reason to fast on Yom Kippur or other fast days, as no one knew if they would have any food to eat the following day, or time to eat it. Mostly, no one thought of joyous holidays, of festivals, or of celebrations—there was little to be joyous about. Many years later, in the U.S., a highly educated Jewish woman asked Ida what she and the partisans used for a table linen on Friday evenings, for the Shabbat meal. Ida still laughs incredulously at that question, at the lack of comprehension and understanding about their existence. There was no Shabbat meal, there were no candles, there was no gefilte fish, and there was not even a table. There was nothing but a constant, daily, even hourly fight for survival.



## SAVING LIVES

### **'To Save a Single Life Is to Save a Generation' (Jewish Proverb)**

*Rubin and Ida risked their lives to save many people, Jews and non-Jews alike, strangers as well as friends. Many of these people survived the war, had families, and prospered. Rubin and Ida remained life-long friends with many of these people.*

Throughout the war, if Rubin and Ida met other Jews, strangers or not, they embraced them like close relatives. The news of mass killings and concentration camps was becoming widespread. Rubin, Ida, and many other Jews in their situation, all thought that they themselves might be the only Jews still alive in all of Europe. Periodically Rubin would come across desperate Jews who escaped from mass killings. Sometimes he knew these people, and sometimes they were complete strangers. These people were often hungry, without proper clothing, without weapons, or without the will or skills to survive in the forest. If necessary, Rubin would pay Gentiles to hide these people, using Nazi loot or other goods to barter for lives. In a few instances, he obtained gold jewelry and gold or silver artifacts during raids on Nazi supply locations. These goods were undoubtedly stolen and extorted from Jews. Rubin never thought to use the gold for his personal gain, or to save it for after the war ended, as he never expected to survive the war.

One cold winter day Rubin's unit came across a dejected young Jewish couple wandering forlornly in the forest. By chance, Rubin had met this couple a short time ago in Ivenets. They were originally from Warsaw, but fled eastward when the Nazis invaded Poland. Abraham Schpadel, his wife Choftsche, and their two young children wound up in Ivenets, which was then under Russian control. When the Schpadels moved to Ivenets, they met Roslyn Segalowicz and her children when they bought meat from her. Actually, Roslyn did not really sell them the meat, as they did not have money to pay for it. She gave them the meat, telling them that they could pay "after they settled in". Roslyn knew that it was unlikely that she would ever be paid. This depicts the selfless and generous nature of Roslyn Segalowicz, a poor widow who had compassion for those even worse off than her.

The Schpadel family had owned a prosperous lumberyard business in Poland. Now Abraham was penniless, without even shoes, but that was not the worst of it. In Ivenets, the Schpadel family was horribly caught up in the mass killings. Their two young children, ages three and five, were murdered by the killing squads in one of the early mass killings. Abraham and Choftsche were forced into the Ivenets ghetto while they were still in mourning for their children, and were among the few who survived its liquidation. They were then sent to larger ghettos and slave labor camps, first in Dvoretz, then in Novogrudek. The Novogrudek ghetto was being gradually liquidated, and the few Jews kept alive for work gangs were kept jailed in a courthouse. They knew they would all soon be killed. Abraham, Choftsche, and twenty or so other desperate prisoners dug their way out of the courthouse, using spoons as shovels, and digging only at night. After their escape, they wound up in Bielski's Partisan group, in the Nalibocka forests. This is where Rubin fatefully met them once again.



Abraham was utterly despondent when Rubin found him in the woods. He wanted to avenge the killing of his children, but there were not enough guns in Bielski's unit to go around, so Abraham could not fight. Even if he had obtained a rifle, he had no shoes, only bound rags on his feet, and his toes were almost frostbitten. Rubin asked Abraham to try on his own boots for size. Rubin then went out alone, and raided a Nazi post to obtain boots for Abraham—the correct size! Rubin thought only that he had made Abraham more comfortable, that he eased his physical suffering. Many years later, Rubin would find out how that pair of boots had turned this man's life around, how Abraham felt the boots had saved his life.

This couple became lifelong friends of Rubin and Ida. They eventually moved to Israel, and fortunately had another child late in their lives. When Rubin and Ida visited them in Israel, they proudly introduced their daughter Chinga. Abraham told Rubin that he felt 'the boots' Rubin obtained marked a turning point in his life. Choftsche felt that their child would not be there if Rubin had not intervened. They took Rubin and Ida to their apartment, where Choftsche waved her arm around her dwelling and belongings, and said to Ida and Rubin: "This is your house, your home. We owe you our lives, we owe you everything."

Boots played a key part in other instances. Shoes and boots were valuable and necessary for warmth, and to walk and run through the rough forests. While visiting Ida's family one day, which was hidden in the forest, Rubin saw that young Gloria had neither boots nor shoes. She had either outgrown or lost her shoes. Rubin and three other partisans attacked a large Nazi supply depot that was guarded at both ends. They rode in one end of the supply area, killed the guards there, took four horses, a wagon, ammunition, and boots and shoes. As they rode swiftly out the other end of the camp, they brazenly opened fire on the surprised unit of Nazis encamped there. Gloria had her pick of shoes.

One of the people Rubin saved had a personal and emotional encounter with some captured Nazi prisoners. In the summer of 1944, the war was starting to swing against Hitler. The Russians massed 166 divisions of the Red Army and attacked the Germans, advancing steadily into Belarus. At this turning point, the partisans started going out on more offensive search-and-capture missions instead of only sabotage and small raids. Captured German soldiers were interrogated for information, and to see what type of treatment they deserved. In most cases, prisoners captured by partisans were eventually executed. The partisans had no means to imprison or guard prisoners, or to haul dangerous captives along with them. Most importantly, the majority of Jewish Partisans wanted to exact revenge. By 1944, almost every Jewish Partisan had already lost family, relatives, or friends to the Nazis, and knew of partisan comrades tortured by the Nazis. The Nazis knew what capture by the Jewish Partisans meant for them. As the war and the Nazi atrocities were winding down, even Jewish children and old people were in a position to collect revenge.

During this time of increased partisan victories, Ida's neighbor Sasha Minko sent a message to Rubin. She and her sister Suzanna were hiding a Jewish child whose entire family had recently been murdered. The boy had somehow escaped the fate



of his family and come across Suzanna. Luckily, Suzanna had worked as a housemaid for the boy's parents before the war. During the day, the boy was kept hidden inside a small opening in a wall behind the stove in Sasha's house. He was allowed out only at night, when it was presumably safer. Almost unsurprisingly, their neighbors had found out what Sasha was doing, and were threatening to turn them all in. By this time, Ida's younger brother Joseph had joined Rubin and Ida in the Bielski *otriad*. Rubin and Joe rode miles through areas filled with enemy soldiers to save an eight-year-old boy whom they had never even met.

They took the boy back to the partisan camp, where he remained with Ida and Rubin, literally becoming part of their family until the war ended. After liberation, Benjamin immigrated to Israel, where he eventually became Chief of Border Police in the City of Tiberias. During a trip to Israel in the 1960s, Ida and Rubin met him for the first time since the war. Benjamin of course thanked them again for saving his life, and showed them his three children, who would not be there if it were not for Rubin. Benjamin also mentioned the book he had just written about his life. In talking about their ordeals, Rubin and Ida reminded Benjamin about one very emotional event, which Benjamin had forgotten to include in his book.

During their stay in Bielski's camp, three captured Germans were brought in for interrogation. The prisoners were taken into a hut for questioning. When they were brought out, they were immediately surrounded by a mob of Jews of all ages that had been waiting outside. The armed partisans stepped back, and let the unarmed men, women, and children come forward to face the enemy that had terrorized them. Eight-year-old Benjamin Malachovsky, a skinny little boy, grabbed a stick and pushed his way through the throng. He started to thrash all three Germans, one stroke at a time, while the throng watched in silence.

With each stroke, little Benjamin exclaimed the following words:

"This is for my father, who you murdered....."

"This is for my mother, who you killed....."

"This is for my little sister Tziporah, because you killed her....."

"This is for Motte my brother, who you slaughtered....."

And on and on, repeating the names of his other murdered relatives...

Benjamin continued until he had no strength left in his small and thin arms. The Nazis were then beaten and flogged to death by the vengeful mob. So ended the lives of these Aryans, these supermen, these monsters: whipped and humiliated by an 8-year old with a stick, and thrashed to death by old men and women.

Rubin and Ida remember another boy whose life they saved. On the way back from a very successful mission, Rubin and David Plotnik saw a young boy lurking in the brush, near the village of Klitaszcze. The boy saw them also and immediately ran away from them. Rubin chased after the boy and caught up with him in the woods. The hysterical and trembling boy thought Rubin was a Nazi. Why else would anyone chase him if not to kill him? The boy's name was Maxim Katsman, and he was 8 or 9 years old. He was the survivor of a mass killing in Minsk, and had recently seen his whole family slaughtered. Rubin calmed Maxim down and brought him back to the partisan



camp, where Ida saw that Maxim was very sick. The partisans would normally not let the boy stay with them, but Ida hoped he would get better in a few days and they would then find another place for him to stay.

The next day Rubin's unit had a remarkable victory. They blew up a large train, and killed thousands of Nazi troops. The Partisan commander was so elated that he allowed the boy to stay in the medical bunker under Ida's care. This was an extraordinary exception, since this boy was not related to anyone in the *otriad*. Ida thought that Maxim had tuberculosis, and she nursed him day and night. Still, young Maxim got sicker and weaker. Rubin got Maxim onto an airplane to a real hospital in Russia. In their usual concerned manner, Ida and Rubin sought out this boy in later years, but were never able to locate him.

Rubin and Ida continued to help people in Europe for many years, even while they were still struggling to make a decent livelihood in America. They regularly sent "CARE" packages to Sasha Minko's son in Poland. Ida and Rubin never really knew what this man's sympathies or activities were in the war, whether he sided with the Nazis, betrayed Jews, or was sympathetic to, or aided Jews. In any case, out of gratitude for his mother's good deeds, the packages were sent for many years. These packages contained clothing, food, medicine, money, and other valuable goods that were scarce in Poland, similar to the packages they sent to their relatives in Europe and Israel.

Rubin's comrade mentioned above, David Plotnik, remained a family friend in the U.S., and was active in several partisan-remembrance organizations. When asked about his own heroics, he stated: "The main reason I fought with such valor and without fear was the awareness that I was fighting the battle of my murdered brothers and sisters, of the innocent women and children who had been tortured to death, and that I was avenging the blood of my mother and the Jews of my home town, Pinsk, for the honor of our people."



## THE MIRACLES

*Rubin's many escapes from death were often near miraculous. A policeman unexplainably kicked him back into line, saving his life. Insects bit him so badly he could not join a doomed mission. He was to be executed for falling asleep while on guard duty, but was saved when other partisans also fell asleep. He escaped from a Nazi trap when a river froze, and he fled over the ice. He was forced to be point man on a mission, and all the men behind him were killed. He did a good deed, for which he was warned that an anti-Semitic partisan planned to kill him. Rubin survived poisoning, beatings, and anti-Semitic assaults. After a major Nazi offensive, Ida was told that Rubin was caught, tortured, and hung. When he crawled into the camp days later, she nearly fainted.*

Rubin had so many confrontations with death, and so many miraculous escapes, that 'lucky' does not adequately describe his survival. To say Rubin was lucky is irrational anyway. How lucky can a young man be who has just lost his mother and young sisters to brutal killers, and who thought that each day would be his last?

Maybe the Yiddish term '*bescherf*', which means pre-ordained, or planned by G-d, can explain his survival. Maybe it was Rubin's destiny to be saved so that he in turn could rescue others. Maybe Rubin, or the people he saved, will have descendants important for humanity, or for Judaism. Maybe it was Rubin and Ida's fate to meet, to survive, and to marry, to allow their values and heritage to be carried forward by their progeny. There must be a reason beyond just luck.

Before joining the partisans, young Rubin had already escaped death several times. Once a Polish policeman literally kicked him back into line, saving him from a mass killing 'selection' for which Rubin had unwittingly volunteered. In the Ivenets ghetto, Rubin was nearly beaten to death by a bunch of Polish policemen, and only saved because he had not yet finished painting a cabinet for another policeman. He eluded selections by hiding in his hole beneath his barn. These escapes were amazing, but there were many more chilling and narrow near-death experiences.

In the early days, the danger from Nazi collaborators and anti-Semitic peasants was immense. Jewish Partisans had not yet established their strength or credibility, and had not yet instilled the fear of retribution into collaborators. In one experience, when Rubin was in Victor's group, they questioned a farmer about Nazi activities in the area. The farmer invited them into his home for some whiskey, a surprising offer usually accepted immediately. The farmer filled a glass for each partisan, but did not pour any whiskey for himself. Rubin became suspicious, and suggested that the farmer should also join them, but the farmer declined. Rubin then demanded that the farmer take a drink, and the farmer turned white and sweaty. He admitted that he had poisoned the whiskey. The partisans killed the farmer and burned down his home and barn, the normal partisan penalty for duplicity.

In another instance early in the war, Rubin, Victor, and their 14 comrades approached a town frequented by the Nazis. They questioned a villager to



determine if it was safe to enter the village, who told them that the Nazis left days ago. As the partisans entered the town, they were caught in a vicious crossfire from Germans hidden all over the town. It was a trap; the villager and the traitorous townspeople had betrayed them! The partisan group luckily escaped, but many men were wounded. Rubin's brother-in-law Joe Starkman was severely injured, and has the scar to this day. Three weeks later, the partisans went back to the village to exact revenge on the Nazi collaborator and the entire treacherous town.

The partisans planned to kill the villager and his family, and to burn down his house and farm. They also planned to show the town the price for treachery, as a warning to other traitorous villages. The partisans spent an entire day burning down half of this village, house-by-house. The next morning, a passing platoon of Nazis saw the smoldering buildings and attacked the partisans. The Nazis chased the partisans the entire day. In the evening, the partisans crossed a nearby river by ferry, and then found refuge in a barn at the edge of a river. The pursuing Nazis encircled the barn on three sides, with the ice-cold river on the fourth side. The partisans fully expected to be caught, and then tortured and killed. The Nazis settled in for the night, sleeping in trenches that were dug during the First World War. They were waiting until dawn to wipe out the partisans, yelling towards the barn that the partisans should count the hours until their death, that the sunrise would be their last sight. Rubin and his entire group expected to die within hours. During the cold night, the temperature dropped rapidly, and the river froze, turning into a thick sheet of ice within hours. The Germans were probably asleep, not expecting anything but an easy one-sided battle in the morning. By sunrise, the partisan group silently ran to safety on the newly formed ice. They escaped by 'walking on water.'

In an incident in 1942, shortly after Rubin joined the partisans, Rubin and another fighter were assigned to night guard duty, a routine assignment. Two days earlier, two other exhausted partisans assigned to night watch had fallen asleep. Those two unfortunate men were tried and found guilty by the partisan commander, and immediately executed by firing squad. This was the expected punishment for endangering the entire group. There was no appeal or pleading the sentence for this offense. In fact, the strict partisan commanders executed many of their own comrades for numerous offenses and crimes.

Rubin and the other partisan decided to take turns sleeping and staying on guard instead of both staying awake, as they were expected to do. When it was Rubin's turn to sleep, his exhausted partner fell asleep as well. In the morning, they were both found asleep, and placed under arrest. Although there would be a court martial, the outcome was certain. Rubin sat in jail waiting to be shot the next day. More than ever, he was certain that this was the last day of his life, but he never expected to be killed by his own comrades. That night, two other partisans guarding the camp also fell asleep, because all the men were so fatigued from their grueling existence. This would be the first instance where six of their own men were to be shot within just a few days for an offense that any of them could have committed. The other partisans complained to their commander that at that rate they would be killing more of their own than the Nazis.



The death sentence was withdrawn, and Rubin again escaped certain death. However, as their punishment, the offenders were given the most hazardous duty on the next mission. Rubin's punishment was to act as the head scout; he would be the first target any Nazi snipers would see. Rubin led the group from the forest into a clearing. The Nazis had set an ambush. They saw Rubin, and could have killed him, but they waited for the rest of the partisans to come out before firing so they could trap them all. Most of the partisans behind Rubin were killed, but he was unharmed. If Rubin had not fallen asleep, and if other partisans had not fallen asleep on the previous and following nights, he would not have been given the dangerous lead position. He would have been exposed and trapped with the main group. It was a series of fateful and scary miracles.

In the winter of 1943, the partisans planned an important ambush on the Nazis that frequented the small village of Yatatovich. This was another village sympathetic to the Nazis, situated just on the outskirts of the forest. Over 100 partisans surrounded the village, splitting into three groups. They watched the village from the hills for three days, expecting a Nazi column to enter the town. On the third day, just as the disappointed partisan commander was about to abort the mission, they saw a large Nazi convoy of thirteen trucks heading into the village. The convoy was transporting supplies, and carried troops to protect the convoy.

The commander gave the order to attack, and the partisans immediately shot out the first truck to slow the convoy down. By chance, this truck was loaded with ammunition, and it exploded in a ball of fire. The rest of the convoy could not get around this blazing mass. The Nazis troops started to shoot fiercely at the partisans, but the Nazis were quickly surrounded. However, one partisan was wounded, and lay exposed to Nazi fire. The Nazis fired continuously at the wounded man, trying to kill him and anyone foolish enough to try to save him. The *otriad* commander sent Rubin to recover their wounded comrade, while the *otriad* tried to protect Rubin with a barrage of return fire. Rubin reached his comrade, but the Nazi gunfire prevented him from grabbing the man. Rubin returned only with his comrade's valuable rifle, and then went back a second time for his comrade. This time he reached the man and pulled him to safety as bullets whizzed over their heads. In recognition of his heroism, Rubin was commended and received the prized Russian Medal of Honor, called the Red Star. This was Rubin's first medal.

That mission turned out to be an enormous victory for the partisans. They captured trucks full of Nazi weapons, ammunition, supplies, clothing, and food. The partisans killed over 300 Nazis, and only five partisans were killed or wounded. The partisans also captured three Nazis alive, plus ten Polish policemen. Rubin remembers how his hatred got the better of him. He took a small pocketknife and cut the forearm of one of the Nazis, speaking to him the entire time about how his family had been murdered. Then Rubin took some salt, rubbed it into the bleeding knife wound, while telling the German that his pain was still only a fraction of Rubin's pain. The Germans were soon put to death. From one of the dead Nazis Rubin took a pair of sturdy German leather boots for Ida. They almost fit her, but were still too large. So Rubin took the boots to a shoemaker, who remade the boots so perfectly that Ida kept them for several years, until the end of the war.



Rubin also had his share of confrontations with anti-Semitic partisans. He had plotted the death of Victor, an anti-Semitic 'comrade' who was planning to kill all the Jews in their unit. Ethnic Poles who joined the Russian Partisans were commonly unabashed Jew-haters, even towards their fellow partisans. Rubin would not tolerate any insults, either personal or towards his people. During one meal, a strident anti-Semitic Pole told Rubin "he was OK, but the other Jews in the camp were parasites, taking advantage of everyone else". This was one insult too much for the edgy Rubin. He reached for his rifle, intending to kill that bigot on the spot. The other man went for his rifle also. Ida was sitting with the group, and instantly knew that even if Rubin killed this Pole, he would be executed for killing another partisan. She raised her rifle and screamed for everyone to calm down and just go on eating. The men sat down and went back to eating. Ida had just saved Rubin's life. As for the anti-Semitic Pole, he was later killed in a skirmish with the Nazis.

Periodically, the Nazis deployed an entire army into the forests in major anti-partisan sweeps. The Germans usually succeeded in killing about half of the partisans each time they undertook such massive operations, often taking heavy losses themselves. The Nazis were afraid to enter the forest in small groups, and so used huge numbers of troops, artillery, dogs, and even aircraft during these massive assaults. They also used non-German police and locals who knew the forests, assigning these non-Germans to the most dangerous missions. They surrounded all exits from the forest, burnt down pro-partisan villages, and killed partisan sympathizers. In the summer of 1943, the Russian military obtained information about a major anti-partisan operation that the Nazis were planning in the Nalibocki and nearby forests. The Nazis organized more troops and special anti-guerilla units than they had in previous sweeps of the forests. The Germans named this 1943 operation the 'Big Hunt', with the code name "Hermann Undertaking".

The Russian commander knew that these massive forces would overwhelm the partisans if they engaged them in an uncoordinated manner. Therefore, each partisan *otriad* was asked to send a portion of their fighting men to operate under a central organized Russian command. The Bielski *otriad* sent 100 men out of their total 300 fighters (the entire Bielski detachment was over 1,000 people). The partisans redeployed themselves, placed mines, cut down trees to block passage, and arranged ambushes. Despite this coordinated resistance, the Nazis were more successful in this 1943 assault than they were in previous attacks. The partisans suffered very heavy losses, and many of the units disbanded in disarray. Discipline evaporated, and some of the partisans reverted to banditry and robbery. It took some time to re-establish order and reorganize the partisans.

Just before the Germans started the 'Big Hunt', Rubin and eight comrades were sent out on a mission. As they were returning from their operation, the Nazis were already swarming over the forest; the "Big Hunt" had begun. Rubin's group had never seen so many Nazis before. Rubin and his friends were soon surrounded, and scrambled for their lives through the swamps and thick jungle-like growth. The pursuing Nazis were often so close that Rubin could hear their conversations as they argued about which way to go to surround and capture the partisans.



With the Germans and their tracking dogs on their trail, Rubin's group swam to a small island in the marshy forest, hoping the dogs would lose their scent in the swamp. By nightfall though, the Nazis had tracked them down and surrounded the small island. The Nazis and their Ukrainian goons yelled to them that they could not escape, they would be captured at dawn, and would all die in the morning. The Jewish partisans knew the Nazis hoped to capture them alive, to torture them to death. It was another day that Rubin thought would be his last.

The Nazis camped all around the small island, guarding the trapped partisans. On the island, Rubin and David Plotnick were two of three Jewish Partisans. They knew that they could not allow themselves to be captured alive, and demanded that they all try to escape. The Gentile partisans were too frightened to try to escape, and so the Jewish partisans decided to escape on their own. In the middle of the night, the three Jewish Partisans began to walk silently into the swamp, towards the shore where the Nazis were encamped. They held their rifles over their heads as the water came up to their necks, reached the shore, and started running. As they fled, they heard gunfire and assumed the partisans on the island were being killed. What actually happened was that a large group of Russian Partisans stumbled upon the Nazis by accident, and attacked them. The several partisans on the island started shooting at the Nazis from the other direction, either thinking the Nazis were attacking them, or purposefully getting the Germans in crossfire. The Nazis fled, and the partisans that remained on the island also made it out alive.

Rubin still had to escape the other Nazis swarming through the forest. The three Jewish fighters either split up. Rubin ran continuously for nine or ten days, chased the entire time, not knowing even today exactly how long he was pursued. He did not sleep at all, or eat any real food that entire time. When he got a chance, he would push his boot into the swampy ground and drink the brackish worm-filled water that seeped into the depression. He was wearing good German boots, but they became waterlogged, making it difficult to run. Nevertheless, he ran and ran and ran. It rained heavily at times, and the rain may have saved his life, as it slowed the Germans down more than it did Rubin, who ran on desperation.

As Rubin was running for his life, a partisan returned to the camp and told Ida that he saw Rubin's dead body hanging from a tree. Ida collapsed in tears. If Rubin had died, then mere hanging would have been a kind death. More likely, the Nazis would have beaten him to death or chopped him to pieces before hanging him. Ida started to sit *Shiva* for her beloved husband, who had saved her and her family. Ida recalls that death was so common, and people sat on the ground every day—*Shiva* was 'nothing special'. As she was grieving, Rubin staggered into the camp, utterly exhausted, starving, filthy, but still alive. When Ida was first told that Rubin was alive, she refused to believe it. When she actually saw Rubin, she almost fainted.

Finally, Rubin was not only exhausted and starving, but he was also unwashed, and infested with lice, bugs, and fleas. He remembers that his shirt was so laden with lice and bugs that when he put it down, "the shirt literally walked away by itself, carried by the bugs." Today he laughs at the thought of his bug-infested self-powered shirt, but it is unlikely he laughed at it then.



There was still no relief, as the 'Big Hunt' continued, and Nazis were still on the attack everywhere. All the *otriads* were in constant flight, and the losses continued. During this time, Ida worked with a Doctor Ivanov, and his wife Lena, also a nurse. No one knew if they were Jewish, and no one asked. The doctor's wife was pregnant and about to give birth. As their *otriad* fled through the forest, she went into labor and delivered a baby girl. The Nazis were all around, within hearing distance. They knew that when the baby would cry, they all would be discovered and killed. The new mother, heartbroken, knew what she had to do. She drowned her own baby to save the lives of the group. The doctor and his wife also vowed that if they were captured they would kill themselves. This is what led Ida to believe they might be Jewish. Soon after the war, Ida met Lena in Ivenets. She and her husband had survived, and she was carrying her newborn second baby.

As merciless as this may sound, there were numerous incidents of Jewish mothers, the legendary most sacrificing and compassionate mother, killing their infant babies. With little choice, tearful mothers often voluntarily, killed their babies to save others. In some instances, they accidentally or unwittingly suffocated their babies while trying to muffle their cries with their hand or a blanket. In a few instances, mothers chose to give their babies to strangers, or to Catholic Convents, hoping to retrieve them later, or at least to allow them to live. Our extended family contains such an individual. As an infant, Dinah Kazlow's sister Sara was nearly killed by her own parents, as Sara's cries were endangering the lives of their family and group. When they could not bring themselves to do this, they almost gave Sara away. In the end, fate intervened with them also, and their story had a very happy conclusion.

On another occasion in 1944, Rubin was waiting to ambush a Nazi patrol in the forest. By then, the German Army was in a shambles, and the partisans were undertaking numerous aggressive missions. The partisans hid in a safe spot overlooking a road the Nazis frequented. Rubin's close friend was at his side, inches away. Suddenly a single rifle shot rang out. Rubin asked his friend where it came from. There was no answer—his friend was shot in the head, killed by a sniper. It could just as well have been Rubin in the sniper's sights.

Rubin soon received a second medal for again saving another comrade's life on the battlefield. This Medal of Valor is one of the few Russian medals that had the revered Soviet 'hammer and sickle' insignia on it. Ida also received a Medal of Valor for saving the wounded, the 'Red Star for Medical Service'. After the war, they went to Minsk with their written commendations to collect the actual medals, but the lines were so long that they chose to not wait. They never received the medals, which in any case they would have had to discard when they later crossed Europe disguised as Greek Jews.

Rubin and Ida spent over two years in the Russian Partisans, seeing comrades and friends killed and maimed. Over 700 days spent running from pursuing Nazis, their savage dogs, and Jew-hating collaborators. Two years spent living in constant fear and danger, thinking that each day was their last.

Two years full of miracles of survival.



## THE END APPROACHES: 1944

*Because of Rubin's heroism, he was allowed to leave the Russian Partisans and gather Ida's family in Bielski's all-Jewish Partisans.*

Towards the end of 1944, the war turned definitively against Germany. One night, in a masterfully planned and coordinated partisan attack, hundreds of miles of railroad tracks in White Russia were blown up. This trapped the retreating Nazi armies, which were trounced by the Soviets. By then, the Russian Partisans were starting to resemble a true army, larger and better equipped than ever. Their airfield was operating more regularly, delivering men and supplies, and picking up wounded fighters. Food was more consistently available, if not plentiful. The bases still consisted of underground bunkers, but amenities such as bathhouses were added at some camps. However, partisans continued to suffer high casualties as the daily danger did not subside as the German rout began.

In fact, the danger increased. Partisan missions expanded from small hit-and-run raids to larger and more aggressive ones. The Germans were getting more desperate and vicious, knowing that they faced not only defeat, but capture by the revenge-seeking Red Army or partisans. At the same time, the German killing squads also increased their rate of mass murders and ghetto liquidations. In this environment, the safety of surviving Jews was becoming more precarious and pressing, whether in the ghettos, in the forests, or in the partisans.

No one knew how much longer the war would last, and so Rubin and Ida decided to try to gather Ida's family together. Ida's parents and her young sister Gloria were still hiding in a remote hut in the forest. By now, the hidden group here also included Dr. Melamed's wife and two others. The massive German sweep through the forest had taken its toll on this group—Mrs. Melamed had lost her son Ephraim during the "Big Hunt". That offensive absolutely terrified the non-armed refugees hiding in the indefensible huts and bunkers. The only place where they could all be safer, together, and truly welcome, was in Bielski's *otriad*, the main Jewish Partisan camp in the Nalibocki forest. By this time, Bielski's unit was well known throughout the region, but Rubin needed approval to leave the Russian Partisans.

Rubin went to see General Duboff, the General Commander of the Russian Partisans in Byelorussia, to obtain permission to leave the Zhukov brigade. Duboff knew Rubin from before the war, when Rubin was in the reserves. By now, over one third of Rubin's unit had died in battle, and Rubin had proved his heroism many times over. Duboff granted Rubin and Ida permission to leave the Russian Partisans and join Bielski's *otriad*. The commander of Zhukov's brigade, named Moskalow, also appreciated Rubin's bravery and courage. As a 'going-away present', he gave Rubin a wagon, a horse, a cow, food, and his valuable rifle. This may sound like meager rewards for the risks Rubin took, but this gesture of appreciation was unexpected and welcome. Rubin and Ida left the Russian Partisans in style, and picked up Ida's family in their own wagon. They joined Bielski's Partisans, prepared to continue their struggle. Nobody yet knew that in approximately six more weeks the Nazis would be running out of Belarus.



## The Bielski *Otriad*

*Rubin, Ida, and her family joined the Bielski detachment. This group of 1,200 people was unique in history, consisting not only of partisan fighters, but also women, infants, and old people. Their camp boasted a bakery, a sausage factory, a gunsmith, a watch repair service, medical facilities, and even a synagogue.*

There were only several large Jewish *otriads* in Eastern Europe. The biggest, and the one that most fervently welcomed and even sought out all endangered Jews was the Bielski *otriad*. This famous brigade was organized and commanded by Tuvia Bielski, whose partisans saved over a thousand Jewish lives while at the same time fighting the Germans. Bielski's group also had to fight against the many anti-Semitic partisan groups, and stand up to the Russians who tried to control his fighters. Throughout Bielski's days as leader of his group, he continued to believe, and state, "It is more important to save one Jew than to kill twenty Germans."

His welcoming words to new arrivals continued to be the same throughout the war:

**"Life with our group is difficult...We are in danger all the time.  
But if we perish, if we die, we die like human beings."**

While not deeply religious, Tuvia Bielski was extremely proud of his Jewish heritage, and he had boldly stood up to anti-Semitism his entire life. Growing up in the only Jewish family in a small village near Novogrudek, he encountered and resisted habitual anti-Semitism. By the time that Tuvia was 36 years old, he had already lost his parents, his wife, and two brothers to the Nazis. When Tuvia and his brothers were imprisoned in the Lida ghetto, he realized that the escalating killings would soon lead to total annihilation. He persuaded his somewhat reluctant brothers to escape with him, to take a chance that they could survive in the hostile forests. The ill-fated Lida ghetto was later totally liquidated, as Tuvia had foreseen.

They formed a group of Jewish resistance fighters in March 1942. His purpose in escaping was not primarily to fight the Germans, because that would have been largely futile. His original group of 17 people, primarily his family, had few arms and little fighting skills or training. His main purpose in escaping was to save other Jews. From the beginning, Bielski's unit not only accepted any Jew who wanted to join their group, it welcomed and actively sought out endangered Jews. There were also a few Gentiles in Bielski's unit, those who were married into a Jewish family.

Bielski's *otriad* was a 'family camp', with the vast majority consisting of elderly people, women, children, and infants, none of which would have been accepted in any Russian or even Jewish fighting *otriads*. Some families numbered 20 to 25 people, with perhaps only one or two men in the family capable of fighting. Men who could not fight or who did not have weapons performed other necessary functions such as reconnaissance, or services such as gun or equipment repair. Bielski's group was always short of weapons. By the end of 1942, the group of 17 had grown to 150, and shared a grand total of 19 rifles and 2 machine guns.



Bielski's *otriad* grew very quickly to several hundred people, as escapes from the ill-fated ghettos started to accelerate. By the time Bielski's group grew to 1,200 people, there were 360 fighters in the group. The fighters' defended the camp, obtained food, saved other Jews, and carried out raids against the enemy. While all Jews were embraced, men with rifles were of course most welcome, although this was never a pre-condition for joining the group. However, unarmed arrivals often heard subdued murmurs of disappointment. "Here comes more baggage for us to carry" and "a new package has arrived," meant that the newcomers were considered a burden, to be carried by the others.

As for the new arrivals, their first impressions included observations such as: "No Yellow Stars!"....."There are so few fighting men here." "There are so many Jews here...I didn't know there were so many left alive." It is both astounding and depressing to think that conditions had deteriorated so far that in two years so many Jews thought they were the last living Jews in Europe; but that is the way it was.

Bielski's unit originally operated out of the Lipiczanaska forest, later moving to the nearby Perelaz and Zabelow forests. By the end of the 1943 summer, the massive Nazi hunts for Partisans in these forests caused Bielski to move to the Nalibocka forest, his final base. Even then, Bielski's final camp, the most secure one, consisted mostly of underground bunkers. By this time, the Bielski detachment had damaged the Nazi war effort sufficiently that the Germans posted rewards for all the Bielski brothers. When Rubin and Ida joined Bielski's *otriad*, the group was already well established in their final, large camp in the Nalibocka forest.

During the early days of the war, the local non-Germans were a major problem for all partisans, especially the scattered and sparsely armed Jewish groups. All partisan groups were in frequent contact with farmers and villagers for a variety of reasons—to barter, buy, or appropriate food and other goods; to help loyal villagers; to recruit spies; or to inquire about Nazi activities. Some of the non-Germans were on the side of the partisans, but not necessarily on the side of the Jewish Partisans. Some of them were quick to turn in or even pursue Jews for the trivial rewards the Nazis paid, or for the meager hidden 'treasure' they imagined the poor Jews possessed. After the first few betrayals, Bielski's men hunted down and killed the traitors, and nailed notes onto their bodies saying: "This man was annihilated because he cooperated with the Germans and persecuted Jews. [Signed]—The Bielski brothers." Word spread fast that the Jews were mercilessly eliminating collaborators, bounty hunters, and informers. Not only did such actions stop, but the peasants also realized that they had more to gain by helping the Jews.

The opposing Russian and Polish Partisan groups in the area resented Bielski's large and growing *otriad*. Russian antagonism was caused by rivalry for men, for food, and for loyalties of local non-Germans. Bielski's raids were often aimed as much at getting food and other supplies for the non-fighters as at getting ammunition or weapons for the small number of fighters. The Russians also did not welcome all-Jewish partisans or refugees in the forests because they attracted German 'Jew hunts', which further endangered the Russians. Polish and Byelorussian enmity primarily came from ingrained anti-Semitism.



Rivalry for food was a primary consideration, as nearby sources were never abundant enough to satisfy everyone. While no one in Bielski's detachment starved, food was never plentiful, and the variety of food was capricious. Potatoes or onions might be the only food for days on end. It was always a challenging task for 300 fighters to obtain food and supplies for 1200 people. Many non-fighters complained that the fighters had the best provisions; of course, the fighters obtained these goods, and had the opportunity if not the right to pick what they wanted. In contrast, Russian Partisans only had to obtain enough food for their own men, but often many groups tried to get food from the same sources.

Bielski's *otriad* often targeted pro-German villagers and farmers for their provisions, and tried to divert goods that were heading for German garrisons. None of the partisans considered the appropriation of any supplies intended for Germans as robbery, but the taking of 'luxuries' was a cause for disciplinary action. The Germans also obtained much of their food from the same sources. In some areas, the Germans 'taxed' farmers 50%, taking one-half of their produce. Poor local villagers could not be expected to have enough to provide soldiers and partisan groups, and to support their families at the same time.

This competition for food plus underlying anti-Semitism almost caused the destruction of Bielski's group before it even got started. Just after Bielski's group was formed in 1942, some peasants falsely complained to Victor Panchenko, the 25-year-old commander of the strong Russian *otriad* named Octiaber, that they could not supply Panchenko because Bielski's group was constantly robbing them. This infuriated Panchenko, who unilaterally decided that the goods Bielski was confiscating was excessive 'robbery' rather than legitimate need, and that in any case, there were not enough supplies to go around. Bielski's unit, then calling itself the Zhukov *otriad*, numbered only about 20 people. Panchenko's solution was to simply annihilate the entire nuisance Bielski group. At a meeting to discuss the situation with Bielski, Panchenko bluntly announced: "I have decided to shoot all of you." Bielski, however, was not one to roll over or give up easily.

Bielski somehow convinced Panchenko that the peasants were lying to everyone. Bielski offered to not take any goods from specific villages for several days, and persuaded Panchenko to verify this commitment. The next week, Panchenko approached the complaining peasants and asked for some bread for his group. The peasants again accused the Jewish Partisans of taking all their bread, an obvious lie. Panchenko wanted to kill the disingenuous peasants, but Bielski intervened on their behalf. To avoid future conflict, the partisans divided the area into sectors for purposes of food collection. A lasting cooperation and guarded friendship developed between Bielski and Panchenko that later proved invaluable. It also helped that Panchenko fell in love with a Jewish woman in Bielski's group, named Bella. In several instances, Panchenko forced independent or renegade Jewish Partisan groups to join Bielski's detachment so they could be better controlled. Other Russian *otriads* also often coerced their Jewish fighters to join Bielski's unit, since it was a logical dumping ground for Jews they did not want in their own units.



Bielski soon saw that while his group was surviving on its own, official attachment to the Russian Partisan organization could offer many benefits. The Russians were supplying weapons, ammunition, intelligence, and supplies to their partisans units. In case of a German attack, coordination with other partisans could mean survival. However, the Russians were against any non-fighting civilians anywhere in the forests, and especially in its partisan units. The Russians rightfully felt that civilians were a burden on the remaining fighters, who had to feed and protect these civilians. The Russians wanted partisans to concentrate only on fighting the Germans. Even worse, the mobility of partisans burdened with old and young people was compromised, putting the entire group in danger.

Within one year, Bielski's *otriad* had grown from 17 to over 200 people. As the ghetto liquidations and escapes accelerated in 1943, it grew larger still. By the end of 1943, it was approaching 1,000 people. It was relatively secure, strategically located in the depths of the forests with surrounding Russian *otriads* unwittingly serving as a shielding barrier. Bielski's *otriad* became the only partisan group in the region able to provide essential goods and services especially for partisan use. This was due to the skills and abilities, and time availability, of Bielski's non-fighters. Bielski's camp included a bakery, a sausage factory, a gunsmith, blacksmith, a watch repair service. Its medical services included several doctors and nurses, and a separate isolation ward for contagious diseases. These services and merchandise were of direct military value to the Russians, or could be bartered for other essential goods or information. The Russians therefore reluctantly accepted the family makeup of Bielski's *otriad*, and readily used his services and goods.

However, Bielski's fighters remained the most important part of the group as far as the Russians were concerned, and the Russian command constantly tried to change Bielski's mission. At one point, the Soviet head commander in this area, General Platon, wanted to take 100 of Bielski's fighters to reinforce his Russian *otriads*. This was nearly half of Bielski's armed contingent at that time, and would have endangered the entire camp. Bielski successfully convinced Platon that the essential goods and services his non-fighters produced were of value to the Russians, and should be protected. At that time, the Soviet Commander Duboff was subordinate to General Platon. When Platon was later sent back to Russia for another assignment, Duboff became directly responsible for the entire partisan organization. This was important to the Segal family, as Duboff knew Rubin, and he was later able to do a great favor for the entire Segal family.

Bielski had to stand up to the Russian commanders again during the "Big Hunt" in the summer of 1943. The Russians ordered Bielski to pare down his unit to include only single people with arms, and these fighters were ordered to join the Russian Partisans in the thicker, safer parts of the Nalibocki forest. The Russians had no allegiance to the non-fighters, who would have jeopardized everyone's mobility and security, and were willing to just let them fend for themselves. Bielski again disobeyed the Russians, and took his entire unit of over 1,200 people with him. During this entire time, while the Russians were supplying their partisans with weapons and equipment, the Bielski units were not supplied to any comparable extent. Bielski's people were continually short of weapons, ammunition, and food.



Rubin and Ida joined Bielski's detachment during the last phase of Bielski's *otriad*, in the spring of 1944. By this time, the detachment was at its maximum head count, and the camp had a synagogue, a school, a prison, and even a tailor. During the 1944 Passover holiday, some Jews in this group even made matzohs and celebrated with the first real *Seder* in years. At this *Seder*, the required discussion of deliverance and freedom was not of the departure from Egypt, but of the departure from the ghettos. Just after this Passover, a Russian political commissar was assigned to Bielski's group, a further sign of how important it had become. The Segal and Kozlowski families knew this Commissar Shematovietz well, and he was a fair man who often did favors for the entire family.

In Bielski's *otriad* Rubin was welcomed as a true Jewish soldier, and Ida as an experienced and dedicated medical worker. Ida's entire family, Joe, Marcia, Gloria and their parents were also brought into the Bielski detachment, and were now safer and better protected from Nazis and non-German enemies. For the first time in years, the family was together, along with other *landsleit*. There is a widely published photo of a group of over forty Bielski fighters including Joe Kozlowski (in the upper right corner of the group photo). It looks like a rag-tag bunch, with a few weapons and a wild variety of clothing, including walking caps instead of helmets. Rubin was sent out on a few missions during this time, but luckily, fighting against the fleeing Nazis was diminishing in this area. During this period of relative quiet, Rubin managed to save additional Jews, both friends and strangers. The family spent just over six weeks in the Bielski *otriad*, and by the middle of the summer, the Russians had forced the Germans out of Belarus.

Towards the end of the war, Bielski himself came under attack from competing partisan leaders and even some of his own people who disagreed with his hard style of command. Bielski had often made decisions that were unpopular within his own group, including punishments and even executions of dissenters. Various accusations were brought to the Russian military commanders, including an unproven allegation that Bielski had stolen money. Money often changed hands during the war, and partisans used money to barter for people's lives as well as for goods and information. Some of the money was obtained by selling goods confiscated from Germans, or by selling the goods and services that Bielski's people provided. Luckily, the now-supportive Panchenko defended Bielski against these charges, since he witnessed many of these dealings. As the war was ending, the Russians adopted a tough policy towards partisan leaders, many of whom were strong-willed anti-Communists. The Russians did not want to bother figuring out who was a potential 'trouble maker', and leaders such as Bielski risked jail or execution. Partisan fighters were quickly sent to the German front, and most of them died, including Tuvia Bielski's brother Asael.

Up to this time, Rubin and Ida did not know how many Jews had perished in the Holocaust or how many of their relatives had died. Soon Rubin and Ida would find out how lucky they were. The Kozlowski family was the only one from Ivye in which all immediate family members survived, parents and children. Rubin was more representative of the majority. Almost his entire close family was killed, only he and his sister Sonia survived from his immediate family. We lost generations.



## LIBERATION

*When Rubin and Ida went back to their hometowns, they learned that nearly 100 of their close relatives had been murdered, including Rubin's mother and sisters. He never found out how or where they died. It was soon apparent that Jews were not welcome in Russia or Poland.*

By late July 1944, the revitalized Russian Army swept through Belarus and the Nazis were on the run. Over 100,000 partisan fighters emerged from the forests that had been their haven for years. Another 100,000 partisans had died in battles. Before leaving the forest, the partisans blew up their bunkers so the fleeing Germans could not use them. The Bielski detachment was one of the largest groups, and they marched triumphantly through the forest to join up with the Red Army in Novogrudek. The Segal and Kozlowski families were part of this famous march, in which 1,200 people stretched out over one mile. In Novogrudek, the partisans and Russian soldiers embraced as if they were long lost brothers. The Russian Army held a daylong celebration to honor the partisans, bringing in musicians, dancers, and singers to entertain and pay tribute to the partisans. The vodka flowed all day, and there was even a little extra food. Rubin and Ida joyfully remember the huge celebration that marked the end of their grim forest existence.

Rubin and Ida could not believe that they had survived, overcoming both terrible odds and their own beliefs that they would not endure. Only after liberation did they find out how bad the odds had been against them. During their years in the ghettos and in the partisans, they witnessed mass killings, deportations, and slave labor camps. Some of the stories of the scale of the killings sounded unbelievable; they sounded like hysterical exaggerations. They had not yet heard of the numbers of dead at the mass killings, death camps, crematoria, ghettos, and work camps. They did not yet know how many of their relatives had died. Now they found out.

Over one-third of the world's Jews had been killed within 4 years. Over 50% of Europe's eleven-and-a-half million Jews, and 95% of Poland's 3 million Jews were dead, killed by shooting, gassing, cremation, starvation, disease, exposure, torture, experimentation, and other unbelievably cruel means. Ninety percent of Europe's 1.6 million Jewish children were killed. Rubin lost over 55 family members, including everyone in his immediate family except Sonia. Ida lost over 43 close family members. Within both families, over 15 complete households had been wiped out—parents and children. Rubin and Ida were two of the 'lucky' ones. They did not have time to dwell on why they survived when so many others had not, why they had been lucky, blessed, or watched over. No doubt, they were destined to live, just as others were destined to die.

'Liberation' was the end of partisan activities in Belarus, but it was not the end of the war or fighting. Like all men his age, Rubin soon received a draft notice from the Russian Army. This was the fate of almost all partisans after their struggles in the forests ended. They were the right age, had military experience, and the Russian Army did not care about what they had lived through or how many family members had been killed. Russia still needed fighting men to complete their military and political objectives. The war was far from over and many battles lay ahead.



Rubin reported to the draft board, bringing his rifle with him to turn it in. The commander asked why he had a rifle, and Rubin told him he had been a partisan. Rubin showed him his papers and commendations, and told him of some of the operations he had been involved in. The commander took a liking to Rubin and asked him to work in his 'recruiting unit' until he was sent to the front. This 'recruiting unit' did not hand out application forms and pamphlets to volunteers. This was a military police assignment, and this unit went out fully armed to round up reluctant recruits and draft dodgers, and to neutralize insurgents—rebels, anti-Communists, independence fighters, and anyone else with a gripe and a gun. Rubin's life was still at risk, but this assignment was significantly less dangerous than the front. Rubin and his squad had full-blown vicious battles against these groups; it was almost like a new undeclared war.

While on this assignment, Rubin asked the draft board for permission to go to Ivenets to try to find the fate of his mother and sisters. The draft board superior officer asked him to delay the trip for three days, promising him that he could go to his hometown on the fourth day. This was a ruse, as before the three days were over he got a notice to report for immediate transport to the front.

In the meantime, however, fate intervened another time. Rubin went out on a 'recruit hunt' with his commander, driving the third of four horse-drawn wagons, in which rounded-up conscripts and captured prisoners were shackled. As the slow wagons plodded along, Polish Partisans ambushed them. Rubin grabbed a machine gun, jumped off the wagon, and ferociously shot at the attackers while advancing towards them. The partisans did not expect such a counterattack from a bunch of wagon drivers, and they rapidly retreated. The commander of the recruiting unit was greatly impressed, and asked Rubin to sit with him in the first wagon. Immediately upon returning to their base, Rubin became the commander's 'right hand man' and within a few days, his permanent adjutant. Because of his fearless defense of the unit, Rubin now did not have to go to the front. The draft board assignment was somewhat less dangerous than the war front, and at least Rubin could be with Ida. The commander and Rubin became friends as well as comrades-in-arms.

The commander of course allowed Rubin and Ida to go seek out the fate of their homes, relatives, and friends. Ida's home in Mishukovitz was still intact, but nobody wanted to live in that depressing village. In Ivye, Ida found out that her family was the only Jewish family from the area to survive intact. All other families had at least 2 or more people killed, and some families were entirely annihilated. The Jewish homes in Ivye were ransacked and damaged, or unashamedly and illegally appropriated by Gentiles. Their former neighbors showed displeasure in seeing Jews return alive, let alone Jews who could reclaim their rightful belongings. Ida's father went to claim the house he owned with his brother Yitzhak ("cousin Joe's" father, and namesake of cousin Ira), who by now had died in a mass killing. Before the war, the Kozlowskis obtained some income from renting out this house. The house was intact, but a Gentile family was living in it. Rubin gave them several minutes to gather their belongings and leave—or else. They were soon gone. In Ivenets, Rubin found out even worse news.



All the Jewish homes, synagogues, and schools in Ivenets were destroyed. Rubin's house had been totally burned to the ground during a battle between pro-German police and partisans. Rubin investigated his mother's murder, looking for witnesses, and for someone upon whom to take retribution or bring to justice. If a site of death could be identified, he could place a grave marker, or move her to a Jewish cemetery. He spoke to the Gentile woman who hid his mother after the liquidation of the ghetto, but never learned his mother's fate. She was last seen on the road with her daughter and grandson, walking forlornly to her death. He hoped that at best, someone might have buried her in a decent grave. More likely, she might be in a mass grave, or she might have lain forever where she fell. He never found out any more details about her death.

Meanwhile, Ida was sent to work in the Russian hospital in Ivye, caring for not only wounded Russians, but also for Nazi soldiers. She performed her medical duty, but defiantly told the Nazis that she was Jewish and that she "should be spitting in their wounds, putting salt in them", instead of tending to them. These words came from the shy Ida, too bashful to put Rubin's pins into her hair. The Russian secret police came to the hospital also, to check on their Russian comrades or to question Nazi captives. Wounded soldiers came in every day, and each day Ida's biggest fear was that Rubin or her brother Joe would be one of the wounded.

Rubin and Ida traveled to the regional capital of Minsk to receive their medals and official citations. These items could be valuable, as they had to re-build their lives. War heroes who made sacrifices for 'mother Russia' were highly regarded and favored. However, the lines at the bureaucratic Russian agencies were so long that after three days of standing on line, and sleeping outdoors to keep their place in line, Rubin and Ida gave up on the medals. They also met Rubin's sister Sonia and her husband Joe, in Minsk on a similar futile exercise. At about this time, Ida became pregnant with their first child.

One day the draft board commander sent Rubin and another soldier on a mission to bring food to the commander's wife in Moscow. The Russian capital was very short of food, as were many areas in war-torn Europe. In Moscow, Rubin looked for stores where he could buy some food to eat and to bring back to Ivye. Store after store had nothing but empty windows. Then he passed one store that had some food in the window, including a large chocolate bar and a huge whole salami. Rubin went in and asked to buy a chocolate bar and salami, but the storekeeper said that the store did not have any such foods. Rubin offered to buy the foods in the window, at which the storekeeper laughed. "If you could eat them I would sell them to you" the grocer said. The foods in the window were painted wooden models.

While in Moscow, Rubin went to see the commissioner of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Rubin planned to report the anti-Semitic acts still being perpetrated by Russians and others in Ivye. Stalin originally created this committee of prominent Jews in order to win support in the West for Russia's war effort. This committee monitored and publicized Jewish suffering and Nazi atrocities, and promoted Jewish aspirations. While this activity was supported during the war, Stalin started to view such 'bourgeois nationalism' as treason as the war started to wind down.



The commissioner met Rubin and his friend, and asked where they were from. When they told him the Ivye-Ivenets area, the commander became excited and said that he was originally from Ivye also. They were *landsleit*! He pulled them aside into a private room, and whispered to them that survival for Jews under Stalin was becoming perilous. A temporary regulation allowed Polish citizens to leave Russian territory for repatriation to Poland. He told Rubin to leave Russia's area of control entirely, and go to either Palestine or the U.S. Rubin remembers the exact words to this day: "My friend Segalowicz" he said in the Russian manner. "You have a chance, an opportunity, that I do not. Get out as soon as you can. Russia will soon control most of Europe. It will not be pleasant for you or other Jews. Go to the free world." The commander was right. Stalin's anti-Semitic purges and killings soon started. As for this 'Jewish committee', within the next three years most of its chief members were arrested in a post-war inquisition, accused of trumped-up crimes, secretly tried, and executed.

Meanwhile, Ida's father Chaim had no plans to leave Europe at all. He was always a cautious and undemanding person, wary of the unknown. He was intent on staying permanently in the Ivye area, and was already planning to re-start his blacksmith business. Ida's mother was similarly apprehensive, faint-hearted and timid, and just plain worn out from the war. Both were ready to settle for their familiar unsatisfactory life instead of taking chances for a better life in a new world.

Soon after Rubin's return from Moscow, Rubin's commander paid him an unexpected visit. He knocked on Rubin's door in the middle of the night, telling him to not be scared, but he had to give him some urgent and private advice. He knew Rubin was thinking of staying in Ivye for a short while, or possibly leaving Russia for a temporary stay in Poland. The commander told Rubin: "Don't stay here, and don't remain in Poland longer than you have to. It will be dangerous for you. Go to Palestine or America as soon as you can." Poland and Belarus were coming under direct Russian political control. The aging Stalin was starting to persecute Jews, and none of these lands would be friendly to Jews. If he stayed in Ivye, he would eventually be sent to the front, and then what? Draft dodgers, homeless people from Belarus, and ex-partisans avoiding the Russian draft, were besieging Poland. If any of these people found out that Rubin had served on the Russian draft board, and that he was Jewish as well, they would no doubt try to kill him.

Rubin and Ida decided to take these numerous warnings to heart. Rubin and Ida came to the realization that the Jewish life they had known no longer existed. They knew that they could not raise a family or rebuild their lives on the bloody Jewish cemetery called Europe. They decided to leave immediately, for Israel. Ida's parents still did not want to go, so Rubin said to them: "We feel there is no choice for us. Chaya and I are going to *יֵרָא לְאֶרֶץ*. Marcia is coming with us. Make your choice. We are going no matter what you decide." This left Chaim and Leah few alternatives, and the entire family decided to leave the land in which their life had been destroyed, and where they were not welcome. The future appeared frightening no matter what course they chose.



## THE JOURNEY ACROSS EUROPE

*Rubin and Ida left for Israel, crossing Europe on foot. Leon was born in Poland, where Rubin still needed a gun for protection. They then traveled through Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria, where Rosaline was born in Hitler's hometown. They crossed the towering Italian Alps while carrying two infants, and wound up in 'Displaced Person' camps.*

Rubin and Ida came through the war physically intact, with no visible scars. Amazingly, they were never wounded, never captured, never sent to death camps or concentration camps. The fear, threats, hunger, beating, and battles were becoming memories, and part of stories exchanged with other survivors. However, they were not unscathed. No one who went through the war, and saw relatives and friends killed, and who had to kill others, could be unaffected. Behind the physical well-being were permanent emotional scars and wounds. And of course, there were the frequent nightmares, which often caused Ida to cry out in a panic during the night, awakening her in a cold sweat and tears.

Rubin and Ida did not have time to dwell on this, and needed to pick up the pieces of their broken lives. Near the ninth month of her pregnancy, Ida and Rubin left Ivye, and *shtetl* life, forever. Their first stop on the way to Israel was the large industrial Polish city of Lodz, famous for its textile industry. One month after their arrival in Lodz, on August 31, 1945, their first son Leib was born, and named after Rubin's father. Leib means 'lion' in Yiddish, hence Leon, and is Aryeh in Hebrew; Leibel or Leibel is the diminutive. Leib was not born in a hospital, and there was no doctor attending, only a mid-wife. There was no birth certificate—to this day, Leon has no real birth certificate, just a piece of yellow paper with three witnesses' signatures obtained in Italy, when Leon was three years old.

At Leib's *bris*, Rubin passed out. The people there thought Rubin had a heart attack, or maybe the vodka had something to do with it. Actually, Rubin insists that he just became so intensely excited at having a son named after his beloved father, not to mention seeing a son born at all. Before that day, Rubin never really believed that he would live to see any children. Several weeks later, Leon was given a small pox vaccination, and he developed severe complications including bronchitis and nameless infections. Leon had to be taken to a hospital for penicillin injections. The excitement never ceased.

Rubin and Ida stayed in Lodz for ten weeks. Together with other *landsleit* from Ivye, the Segalowicz family moved into a house that they remember well, because it had absolutely no windows. Rubin went to the mostly empty former Jewish ghetto, removed windowpanes from some abandoned houses, and installed them in their house. To support his family, Rubin took some of their food and took a train to Germany, where he bartered the food for clothing and leather goods. He re-sold these in Lodz at a profit, and purchased additional supplies and food for his family.

Among the essential 'supplies' were two guns, a substantial German Mauser and a small pistol. He obtained bullets separately from a Polish black-marketeer who dealt in ammunition. Rubin convinced this black-marketeer to 'donate' the bullets at



no charge after Rubin threatened to turn him into the authorities for illegally selling ammunition. These were tough times for all.

The war was ending, but incredulously, their lives were still in danger, and the need for the self-defense weapons was unfortunately palpable everywhere. Nazi soldiers may have stopped killing Jews, but Poles did not. While they were in Lodz, Polish mobs carried out pogroms against the few remaining Jews, deciding that they should finish Hitler's job. In Joe Starkman's hometown of Kielce, 70 Jewish survivors who returned to their homes were killed by a rampaging mob. The Poles did not want Jews in their midst, they did not want to account for their allegiances and actions during the war, and they did not want give up any of the property and goods they had stolen from their Jewish neighbors. Attacks also occurred in Lodz, and Rubin went to bed with his guns by his side every night.

These events reinforced Rubin and Ida's dreams of living in Israel. Yet, even after the trauma all European Jews had been through, it was difficult to fulfill their dream. The British were severely restricting Jewish immigration into the land they called Palestine, which they controlled under an international mandate. In Lodz, Rubin made contact with the *Bricha* ('escape' in Hebrew), the illicit immigration agency run by the Haganah, and with the extremist Irgun. The Haganah later became Israel's regular army. The Irgun was a breakaway rebel branch that believed that all measures, including violence, should be used to achieve a Zionist state. The *Bricha* worked with the *Aliyah Bet*, the 'auxiliary' (also illegal) immigration agency, which arranged for clandestine ship transport into Israel, breaking the British blockade. *Bricha* representatives, many war survivors themselves, escorted the refugees across the countries of Europe. Between August 1945 and June 1946, over 48,000 refugees left Poland through this network. In total, the *Bricha* brought somewhere between 100,000 and 250,000 Jews to their ancient homeland.

Rubin and Ida wanted to be part of this illegal exodus. They began a long journey, a journey that was not completed for many years and would eventually cover thousands of miles. The journey was circuitous, because their trip was illegal and dangerous. War victims or not, 'displaced persons' or refugees were not allowed to just go where they wanted. The initial solution to the DP problem that the Allied powers proposed was simply repatriation to the victims' hometowns. This became obviously unworkable because many DPs did not want to go back to their homes, which were usually either demolished or appropriated by local Gentiles. Moreover, the hometowns did not welcome the Jews back, either because of anti-Semitism or because the locals would have been deprived of the plundered property that they had gotten from the Jews' misfortunes.

Polish Jews were forbidden to leave Poland, so their entire group was told by the *Bricha* leader to pretend that they were Greek Jews being repatriated to Greece. They were taught a few Greek words, and from that point on were not allowed to speak one word of Yiddish, Russian, or Polish on this entire trip. They were allowed to speak Hebrew, as this was still the universal language of Jews. All identifying belongings and papers had to be left behind. The war commendations, letters, marriage certificate, photos, the poem Ida carried that was written for her friend



Frooma Tamfel, therefore had to be discarded also. They were placed in a group of about 500 Jews, with the *Bricha* leader from Palestine leading the way and bribing guards at the borders. Their friend David Blankfeld made this part of the journey with them. From Lodz, they went to Prague, and then on to Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, as the Czech government tacitly permitted this illegal emigration. Their stay in these cities was brief. All Ida remembers of beautiful Prague was that she was entirely doused with white anti-lice powder at a health office somewhere.

The *Bricha* leader was heading for Romania, one of the most open departure points for Israel. Rubin and Ida had no passports, entry visas, or any papers at all. The problem was not in getting **out** of any country, as most European countries did not really welcome Jews. All of Europe already had the burden of caring for too many homeless dependents. The problem was **getting in** to the next country. It was illegal to enter any country without proper papers, and many countries instituted restrictive immigration laws.

From Czechoslovakia, they went on to Budapest in Hungary, still headed in the direction of Greece and Romania. They spent less than one day in Romania, sleeping in a barn. During one of their overnight stays, Russian soldiers tried to rob the pitiable refugees, hoping to take watches or whatever other trivial belongings they had. From there, their *Bricha* leaders made an almost complete 180-degree turn, and headed for Austria, because the illegal departures from Romania or Greece were becoming more difficult. In Austria, Ida gave birth to Rosaline, their second child, in the city where Hitler was born.

When the time was right to leave Austria, the *Bricha* guides led them across the majestic Italian Alps. Some of the trip was on broken-down busses, but much of the journey was made on foot, over towering and treacherous mountains with no passable roads. They carried both Leon and Rosaline for hundreds of miles. Actually, they went on hands as well as on foot, as the paths were sometimes so steep that Ida had to crawl on all fours. At these times, young men from Betar would carry baby Rosaline. Even in summer, snow covered the peaks of the Alps, and the weather shifted between hot and cold. Under his regular clothes, Leon was bundled up in makeshift diapers made of many layers of cloth slit from garments. When Ida opened these 'diapers', moisture literally escaped in plumes of steam. Diaper rash and prickly heat made a colorful display.

By the time Leon was two years old, he was so attached to his parents that he would not let anyone else carry him except Rubin. Rubin carried Leon on his back and on his shoulders, days at a time, in heat cold, and rain. If Rubin had been taller earlier, this experience would have shortened him in any case. Rubin recalls that even when Leon was off his shoulders, he still felt as if he had a weight pressing him down.

The Segalowicz family finally arrived in Italy, fleetingly halting a tremendously hard journey. From there, they would eventually travel to the United States, a supposedly temporary stop on the way to their beloved Israel. They were getting closer to their dream of a quiet life in a free country, in **קרא לארשי**.



## DESTINATION ISRAEL - יָרָא לְאֶרֶץ

*Relatives told Ida and Rubin not to go to Israel with their young children during the raging War of Independence. The Arab countries had attacked, vowing to finish Hitler's mission. Israel's future looked bleak.*

By 1947, Israel was beginning its fight for independence, and for survival, while the British were keeping Jews out. Most immigrants therefore illegally “ran the blockade”, defying the British Army. The Jewish Agency began refusing to take small children on the dangerous voyage, further delaying Ida and Rubin. Many people ran the blockade repeatedly, as they were often caught. Ida's aunt Neche, and her cousins Chaya and Malka, ran the blockade several times, were caught each time, and then interned in the British prison camps on Cyprus. They eventually made it to Israel, and now have large families there. Chaya's children: Bezalel, Aharon, and Nurit Yudovich. Malka's children: Moshe and Motte Dolev.

The United Nations voted to partition the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into Jewish and Arab states. On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion declared the birth of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel. For Ida and Rubin, this was a miraculous moment. Just a short time ago, they never thought they would survive. Now they were witnessing a dream-come-true, and finally had a country to go to—but when? During this entire time, Rubin and Ida were in limbo, not knowing exactly when they would be on their way to Israel.

The birth of Israel was not to be easy, and after the euphoria and celebrations of Independence Day, reality set in. The Arab state, purportedly Palestine, was stillborn, as the Arabs rejected partition in favor of war. Over 45 million Arabs in the surrounding countries vowed to kill all remaining Jews—to “drive them into the sea”. The Arab armies had been massing and skirmishing at the border even before the British left. Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt attacked on all fronts. Egypt's foreign minister promised his people “not a war, but a parade without risk”. Egypt's King Farouk issued a victory postage stamp—to commemorate Israel's defeat. Against these millions, Israel had less than one million Jews, many of them pitiful war refugees speaking dozens of languages. A good number of these refugees were physically and mentally impaired, devastated by the war. Israel had at most a rag-tag army, almost no airplanes, and a few ancient and homemade weapons, many of which made more noise than damage.

As the War of Independence raged, relatives in Israel urged Ida and Rubin not to come to Israel. The relatives wrote that although they had young children, Rubin and Ida would no doubt both be called to military duty. The relatives suggested that they should just wait until the war was over, although nobody really knew when that might be, or what the outcome would be. Rubin and Ida decided to wait in the DP camps for a while, but they did not give up their hope of returning to Israel, the land of their dreams. Their son Leibel was almost two years old, and was able to communicate that he also had his mind set on Israel. When greeting his parents' friends or relatives, he would salute in military fashion and say ‘Tel Chai’, briskly bringing his right hand up to his forehead. This was the military style greeting of Betar. Leibel had his heart set on יָרָא לְאֶרֶץ also, even after coming to the U.S.



## In The DP Camps

*The close quarters and poor conditions in the DP camps resulted in a continuing round of contagious illnesses. While Ida retained her devotion to the Jewish religion that had seen her family through the worst times, Rubin lost his faith in G-d. However, he remained strongly Zionist and looked forward to a better life in Israel.*

After leaving Poland, the *Bricha* leaders took the refugees to the displaced persons (DP) camps in neighboring Austria. They went quickly through Vienna, and then were led to the large Ronshaufen DP camp complex in Braunau, near the large city of Salzburg. Braunau was the birthplace of Hitler, and it was here that Ida and Rubin would ironically have a celebration. In that DP camp in Hitler's birth city, their only daughter was born on January 17, 1947. She was of course named in memory of Rubin's mother, Roslyn (Reyzelle in Yiddish; Shoshana, in Hebrew, meaning Rose; and later to be Rosaline). Several years later Rubin's sister Sonia also named her daughter Rose in memory of their mother.

Again, there was no party or celebration, just words of "Thank G-d we're still alive." If Rosaline had a birth certificate, it also had to be destroyed when they later crossed borders illegally. When birth papers had to be later obtained, Rosaline's place of birth had to be registered as Italy, not Austria, because Rubin and Ida had to prove that they had resided in Italy for over two years in order to be allowed to leave. To this day, Rosaline's birth certificate, or whatever passes for it, therefore states that she was born in Italy. This 'document' cost a precious \$50.

Life in the DP camps was not easy. When the Allies liberated the concentration and death camps, the Jewish inmates were not allowed to leave, even those who were healthy enough to take care of themselves. The Allies were afraid that the Jewish inmates would track down and attack collaborators and Germans. Unbelievably, the Allies made many of the former concentration camps into guarded DP camps. Barbed wire, watchtowers, gates, and armed patrols remained. The food remained barely edible, more so when given to people already suffering from starvation and disease. Medical attention was given, but many Jews, especially weakened and sick former concentration camp inmates did not live through the ordeal. Illnesses often swept rapidly through the crowded DP camps, resulting in 'quarantine' of entire barracks or even camps. Eventually, nearly 14-million displaced people were in these DP camps, including many non-Jewish homeless or stateless Europeans.

At Bergen-Belsen, the actual inmate's barracks were burned as a health precaution. Eleven thousand former concentration camp inmates, now quickly renamed DPs, were kept in nearby German Army barracks, along with German prisoners! Without any signs of sensitivity, the DP camp was still called Bergen-Belsen. In the words of the American investigator for President Truman: "We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them. ....Our military is guarding them instead of SS troops. ....The German people may suppose that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy." This report helped lead to more liberal immigration policies in the U.S., and improved conditions in the DP camps.



The Braunau DP camp where Rubin and Ida wound up was part of the Salzburg DP camp complex. This consisted of three permanent and five transient or transit camps housing 13,000 Jews in total. Some days as many as 2,000 people entered the camp, while others of course left at the same time. Rubin and Ida's housing quarters had seven apartment buildings. The transit camps were not designed for extended stays, and DPs in the transit camps usually had the necessary papers for departure within a short time. However, the 'short time' sometimes stretched into months, and semi-permanent institutions were formed. These camps had bakeries, kosher kitchens, children's playgrounds, schools, synagogues, newspapers, adult work training programs, and theater groups.

DPs were not allowed to work, or rather, they were not allowed to work and be paid. This policy may have been aimed at discouraging DPs from establishing themselves and remaining in the countries they were stationed in. Rubin spent his time on several camp committees that ran camp activities and dealt with everyday living problems. Rubin and his friends had ample time on their hands, and he needed to earn money for necessities beyond the basics supplied to them, including medicine and better food for the children. Rubin knew how to slaughter cattle—that was what he was planning to study in his youth, and he had helped his mother butcher meat. Rubin and some friends from the DP camp bought a cow from a farmer, stealthily brought it into their house, and butchered it with whatever knives and small saws they could find. They sold the meat to other DPs and made a small amount of money. This was an extremely dangerous and illegal undertaking, but it was apparently somewhat common. Selling meat obtained in this way could lead to jail, or worse. In some cases, locals hanged DPs who were caught stealing cows.

Rubin also went to *schul* with the other men, but at that point in time, Rubin did not go to pray. He had lost his faith and belief in G-d, as had many other victims of the Holocaust. This was not uncommon, and every individual survivor had personal reasons and reactions to his or her ordeal. Some survivors lost their convictions and their belief in G-d, not believing that any merciful G-d could allow the horrors that occurred to happen. Some survivors maintained their beliefs in the G-d that saved them, even while others perished under the same circumstances. Many Jews through the ages have believed that all the bad times that Jews have been put through have been tests of faith, because it is easy to believe in G-d during the good times. Some survivors lost and then recovered their religious convictions as life's events unfolded, and as their bitterness was replaced by other feelings.

Rubin's faith in G-d and belief in Judaism came back gradually over time, as his resentment diminished and his life became more balanced. Within several years, by the time Rubin's family was becoming settled in the U.S. and he had his children's spiritual welfare and Jewish education to consider, Rubin was an active member of a synagogue in Brooklyn. In later years, Rubin's former religious beliefs came back stronger than ever, and he now prays daily at one of the two *shuls* he belongs to in Belle Harbor NY. Despite her ordeals, Ida never lost her faith in her Jewish G-d and religion, the religion that had seen her family through the worst of times. She never lost her love of Judaism, and never wavered in her Zionist yearnings.



During that entire time, even while his faith in a merciful Jewish G-d was shaken, Rubin remained strongly Zionist, perhaps more so than before the war. For many years after permanently settling in the U.S., Rubin and Ida talked of having a second home in Israel, and spending half their time there. With the arrival of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Rubin and Ida settled for long vacations and visits to Israel. The majority of Jewish refugees shared these Zionist dreams of living in Israel. At one point, DP camp residents had to declare their ultimate destinations. Eighty percent of the refugees listed Palestine, as the British mandate region was then called, as their first destination. For their second destination choice, the majority of refugees also wrote in Palestine. They were instructed to put in another second choice destination, to not write Palestine twice. Hundreds of forms came back with the chilling second choice, "If not Palestine—crematoria".

In Austria, Ida and Rubin joined the Betar organization once again. Ida was by now too busy taking care of Leibelle and Reyzelle to be very active. However, Rubin became active in Betar, knowing more than ever that Ze'ev Jabotinsky had been correct. Jews would need to fight to regain their homeland. In Betar, the Jewish youth had made a pledge: 'In blood and fire Judah fell, and in blood and fire Judah shall arise'. In 1947, Rubin was planning to join the extremist Irgun when they reached Israel, and continue his fight for freedom. Despite Rubin's wartime suffering and near-death experiences, he still courageously planned to bear arms again, and to fight the British and the Arabs as he had fought the Nazis.

Rubin and Ida remained in Austria for about two years while the Jewish Agency planned their next moves. Many of their other relatives were with them: Ida's parents, Marcia, Gloria, Joe, and Marcia's future husband, Morris Albertstein. For those with Israel as their destination, the *Bricha* decided when the time was right for each family. Individuals and families without children were often taken first to any destination because it was easier for them to travel. Some relatives soon left separately for various destinations. Cousin Joe was an orphan, and was therefore able to be one of the first to leave Europe.

From Austria, the next stop on the way to Israel was Italy. The Italian DP camps were a staging ground for both legal and illegal immigration because many of them were situated near coastal departure ports. After crossing the Italian Alps with a group of 100 people, they arrived in Milano. From there, they took a train to Rome, where they were placed into another DP camp, located at 41 Via Latina, a still-existing small street not far from the Coliseum. Both Leon and Rosaline visited Via Latina nearly 50 years later, and by then it was a small street full of aging homes and stores. Ida's parents and sisters were already in this camp when Ida and Rubin arrived. By then, the Pope had already blessed Chaim, when he attended an outdoor ceremony in the Vatican. Soon they were moved to another DP camp in Castel Gandolfo, near one of the Pope's summer residences. During this time, relatives in the U.S. sent Rubin and Ida papers sponsoring their emigration to America. These were valuable documents, ascertaining that Rubin would be employed, that his bills would be vouched for, and that his family would be taken care of. Rubin and Ida burned those papers. How could they survive the Holocaust and go anywhere but to the Jewish homeland?



By 1948, relatives in Israel were writing to Ida and Rubin telling them to postpone their dreams of coming to Israel. The situation there was getting worse. At the same time, illegal immigration to Israel for families with small children was slowing down, if not stopping. The *Bricha* was not able to give any departure date for Israel, and the weeks were stretching into months. Other friends and relatives were leaving for more permanent homes in the U.S. and elsewhere. Rubin and Ida decided to make a sacrifice for the sake of their young family. They would delay their dreams temporarily, would go to the U.S. for a brief stay, and then head for Israel as soon as possible.

Rubin and Ida filled out more forms, and after another wait were transferred to the Bagnoli DP transit camp, outside of Naples, which was a transfer point for refugees possessing exit visas. This was the largest DP camp in southern Italy, situated at a former American army camp. It housed 2,300 refugees, and held up to 200 people in each of 20 barracks, with men separated from women and children. The food in this particular camp was supplied by the United Nations Refugee Relief Agency, and the food was famous for being unfamiliar, terrible, and meager. The food was supplemented by rations provided by the Jewish JOINT Relief Agency. While not necessarily wanting more terrible food to eat, even bad food could be sold or traded when people were short of food. Food was still rationed in post-war Europe, and some of the canned foods sent to the camps were unavailable outside the camps. Rubin was able to earn money by selling the food and cigarettes provided in the camp, using the proceeds to buy better and more edible foods. One day, Rubin obtained several pigeons, which Ida cooked for Leon and Rosaline. The 'squabs' were supposedly a delicacy. During their extended stay in Italy, Rubin and Ida learned to understand and speak passable Italian.

The cramped quarters, substandard sanitary conditions, general ill health, and poor nutrition made the danger of illness a major problem as departure times approached. The authorities would not allow any person with even the most trivial illness to depart. If even one child developed a communicable disease such as measles or chicken pox, the entire barracks was quarantined, and no one was allowed to leave or enter. If the quarantine period happened to overlap a scheduled departure date, the boat would sail without any of the detainees, ill or not. There were no exceptions because of the danger of creating an untreatable epidemic while at sea. No country wanted boatloads of sick or contagious people to even approach their shores. It was difficult enough to deal with 'healthy' immigrants who often got sick while on the ship.

Infectious childhood diseases were common, and sure to occur at just the wrong time. The run-down children developed illnesses incessantly, and transmitted them back and forth to each other. To circumvent the potential and unceasing quarantine restrictions, Rubin paid an Italian woman to allow him to "rent a room" so he could give the immigration authorities a non-quarantined 'home address'. To pay this woman for the fictional use of her address, he used the camp food and goods, items such as salami, cigarettes, cured fish, and canned food. Without danger of quarantine, Rubin and his family were sent from Naples to the expected departure port for the next ship to the U.S., another DP transit camp near Salerno.



The DP camp in Salerno was another former American army camp composed of Quonset huts set on the sandy beach. Quonset huts are a now-classic form of quickly fabricated barracks, constructed of huge corrugated metal sheets bent into long, inverted U-shaped tunnels. Both ends of the tunnel are closed off with metal or wooden walls containing doors, creating a distinctly ugly building. As soon as Rubin and Ida unpacked their meager belongings, a child in their barracks came down with chicken pox. They quickly changed barracks to avoid another quarantine. All of a sudden, for unexplained reasons, the exasperated DPs were sent back to Bagnoli, where their departure was now re-scheduled within 4 days.

On the trip back to Bagnoli, doctors took the children's temperatures, checking again for illnesses. Upon arrival in Bagnoli, the doctors called out the names of 10 children, including Rosaline. Rosaline apparently had a low-grade fever of barely 100-degrees, but the doctors did not know what illness she had, or what they were treating her for. All 10 children were taken to a quarantined infirmary ward, and put into a large room containing dozens of neatly lined-up cribs. Rubin, Ida, and the other anxious parents waited outside the building, not knowing what else to do. Separated from her parents, one-and-a-half year old Rosaline stood up in the crib and started to cry, at the same time holding on to the crib rail and shaking it back and forth. She shook the crib so hard it fell apart, and the rail fell to the floor. In the next crib was Joel Blankfeld, the one-and-a-half-year-old son of David Blankfeld, a family friend. Luckily, precocious Joel already spoke well. He started screaming also, yelling at the top of his voice, in Yiddish of course: "Reyzelle fell out of her crib .....Reyzelle fell out of her crib".

Out in the street, Rubin heard Rosaline crying and screaming, and then heard the shouts that his baby daughter had fallen out of her crib. He ran into the building and started screaming at the authorities at the top of his voice, raving like a mad man, threatening to kill them if his daughter was hurt. Rubin still remembers some of the words he yelled out: "Do you think we are still under Hitler here too? What are you doing to us?" By now more children were screaming in the ward, and Rubin was yelling and acting so wildly that he scared the authorities. The bureaucrats made a quick decision, and immediately gave up, probably in fear for their safety. Within minutes, they told Rubin: "Take the children. ....Take **all** of them". All the children were immediately scooped up by their anxious parents.

The never-ending nightmarish circle of illness, quarantine, and examinations was not yet over. One day before the boat was to leave, the DP camp was notified that all children would be called for another and final medical inspection. Healthy children would be tagged, and would not go through any additional medical exams. Tagging was literally that. A postcard-sized identity card with the final medical authorization was attached to a braided-steel wire bracelet or necklace on each child, sealed with a dime-sized lead tamper-proof plug. Predictably, that afternoon Leon came down with a very high fever, over 105-degrees. Even a 100-degree fever would have cancelled the entire family's departure. Rubin ran around and luckily found a sympathetic doctor who was willing to give Leon an extra-large penicillin injection for one American dollar. The dollar was only the cost of the medicine, equivalent to perhaps \$50 or more today, a huge sum then.



The fever started to subside rapidly after midnight. By morning, Leon's temperature was lower than normal and his eyes were watery and glazed. Ida knew the fever was just down temporarily—one dose of penicillin would not cure whatever illness he had. The inspecting doctor looked at Leon's watery and shiny eyes, felt his very cool brow, and waved them on. The family only felt relief when the boat anchor was raised and the harbor was disappearing behind them. By then, Leon's fever was rising again. The ship's doctor examined Leon and medicated him, and his fever started to subside. Predictably, by then Rosaline had gotten whatever illness Leon had. Neither Rosaline nor Leon ate any solid food during the entire ten-day trip. At least, however, this ended the quarantine episodes in the DP camps.

In this last DP camp, Rubin also had a health scare. During one of the endless medical exams, the camp doctor looked at an X-ray, and told Rubin that he was missing half of one lung. Rubin felt a chest pain immediately and almost passed out. He was barely able to walk for days, felt weak and faint, and did not exert himself. He could not understand how he could have survived the demanding physical experiences he had been through with part of a lung missing. Chasing and running from Nazis, riding horses, carrying heavy explosives, carrying Leon over the Alps—how did he do all these strenuous things with part of a lung gone? Finally, he went to see a specialist, who told him that the first doctor was either mistaken or looking at another person's X-ray. Rubin had an enlarged heart, but his lungs were fine, and he had both of them. Rubin felt better immediately.

By this time, Ida and Rubin spoke or understood several languages: Russian (two dialects), Polish, passable Italian, a smattering of other languages, some Hebrew, and mostly—Yiddish. Leon and Rosaline spoke only Yiddish. The one language they did not know was English, and they were headed for America.

**They had traveled well over 2,000 miles, largely on foot, while carrying their children. They went through eight countries on their remarkable voyage: Belarus, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Italy. They had crossed the intimidating Alps.....on foot.....through all sorts of weather.....across forbidding terrain, and their odyssey was still not over.**



## A NEW LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

*Emulating the endless historical migration patterns of our ancestors who moved from areas of persecution to lands of more freedom, the Segalowicz and Kozlowski families left Europe for America. The United States was to be a temporary stop, on the way to Eretz Yisroel.*

### The Immigration Experience

*An American doctor examined Rosaline and Leon before they disembarked, and said in Yiddish: "I never saw children with such enflamed ears, noses, and throats." Ida did not bother explaining that they had just crossed Europe on foot; had climbed the Alps; endured epidemics; and gone through a grueling mid-winter ocean voyage.*

The Segalowicz family finally left Italy in November 1949 on the American Army ship 'Marine Jumper'. The Marine Jumper was one of 20 'C4' cargo-and-troop ships built for the U.S. Army during World War II by the Kaiser Company. These ships were originally intended to carry crates rather than people, and were the largest cargo ships built by the U.S. up to that time. The ship displaced 12,000 tons, was 520 feet long and 71 foot wide at the beam (widest part), and had a speed of 17 knots. The ship was intended to carry 3,500 troops when jammed stem-to-stern, with a crew of less than 100. On the return trips to Europe to pick up more refugees, the Marine Jumper and other such ships carried full loads of German and Italian prisoners of war who had been imprisoned in the U.S. The Marine Jumper never had an opportunity to carry war materiel to battlefronts, because the Japanese surrendered before the ship was completed. It was then converted to a troop, prisoner, and refugee ship, and it later served in the Korean War. The Marine Jumper was eventually used as an "austerity ship", and run by the Moore-McCormack Lines to carry budget-minded people to Europe, until it was finally scrapped in 1988. A marine historian called these ships "truly ugly".

For purposes of carrying war-weary immigrants, the ship carried only 850 people, with a crew of 200. Each cabin held between 8 and 32 people. The winter trip across the Atlantic was hard, with very rough waters. Passengers had the choice of either freezing on deck or sweltering in the cabins. This was not a pleasure cruise for anyone. Food was served family style in two dining rooms, and was supposedly fairly good. Most passengers were seasick though, ate little, and retched on empty stomachs. On this ship, passage was paid for by the UN Refugee Relief Agency, and passengers who were not seasick had to work, mostly cleaning the ship and helping the small crew. Unfortunately, the smells of vomit, sweat, and human odors often made the healthy people sick as well. Rubin did not get seasick, ate well on the ship, and worked at assigned tasks such as washing dishes and cleaning floors.

As the boat entered New York harbor, the ship passed the welcoming Statue of Liberty. By this time, the immigration procedures were expedited to handle the large number of refugees, and the Marine Jumper by-passed Ellis Island. Immigration officials boarded the ship to inspect the arrivals and collect their forms. Standard immigration forms asked immigrants to swear that they were not mentally, physically, or politically 'undesirable'. Arrivals also had to declare that they were not



bigamists, anarchists, felons, or cripples. On some forms, immigrants also had to state their religion and race—Jews were shown as belonging to the “Hebrew” race.

HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) officials came on board to help immigrants fill out the forms, as few refugees knew much English. HIAS helped Rubin and Ida get ‘settled in’. HIAS was started on Manhattan’s Lower East Side in 1881 by Jewish immigrants in order to provide basic needs to the wave of refugees from Czarist Russia. The tiny Russian Jewish community in New York was starting to swell by that time, after the assassination of Czar Alexander II led to severe anti-Semitism and expulsion of Jews. HIAS supplied clothing, food, transportation, job referrals, and temporary housing to anyone needing such help. In 1904, HIAS started to provide legal assistance to immigrants, allowing entry to many who would otherwise have been turned away. By 1924, the U.S. started imposing significant immigration restrictions, including a literacy test. The restrictive National Origins Quota Act limited the number of immigrants to no more than 2% of each nationality that resided in the U.S. in 1890, and had a devastating effect on Jewish immigration after WW II. HIAS helped immigrants overcome the bureaucratic hurdles, and often did detective work to locate long-lost relatives. Later, HIAS helped Jewish immigrants from other troubled countries including the Soviet Bloc, Ethiopia, and Arab countries, and even non-Jewish war victims from countries such as Vietnam.

On board, an American doctor examined Rosaline and Leon and said in Yiddish: “I never saw children with such enflamed ears, noses, and throats.” Ida did not bother explaining what they had been through; he probably would have thought that she was exaggerating. Who would believe the story of two young children, carried thousands of miles; evading border guards; crossing the Alps; living in squalid DP camps; facing never-ending epidemics and quarantines, poor food, and a sickness-plagued mid-winter cross-Atlantic voyage?

Friends or relatives had advised Rubin and Ida to Americanize their names, to make them easier to write and pronounce. Someone obviously told them which English names had some relationship to their Yiddish names. Reuven became Rubin, Chaya became Ida, and Segalowicz was shortened to Segal. Reyzel became Rosaline, and Leibel became Leon. The name selection process probably was not the most important thing on anyone’s mind.

On November 21, 1949, the Marine Jumper docked at Pier 39 in lower Manhattan. On that cold and snowy night, HIAS and Red Cross workers were standing by with donuts and hot drinks. When they left Italy, the weather was warm, and no one brought warm clothes, if anyone even possessed winter clothes. Four-year old Leon, sick from the trip, started to shiver in the frigid cold. Rubin took off his only coat and put it on Leon. Leon ate a donut, and immediately vomited on the coat.

America has been called the land where ‘the streets are paved with gold’. Ida and Rubin were not looking for gold or fortunes, and were too realistic to believe fairy tales of instant wealth. They were only seeking a peaceful life after years of war, turmoil, and death. They sought a new life for themselves and their children, one that would be free of anti-Semitism, persecution, and suffering.



## Settling In

*When they first settled in the U.S., Ida cried each night because she longed to be in Israel. Soon she cried for other reasons, when swastika-emblazoned American Nazi Party 'storm troopers' paraded across U.S. cities. Rubin worked seven days a week, happy that he had work. Ida also worked, sewing clothes in her spare time.*

HIAS helped the newly re-named Segal family obtain temporary living quarters. They were first sent to a room on an upper floor in a high-rise building, but the elevator did not work. They took the next apartment they saw, which was in a gloomy Manhattan welfare hotel on Irving Place and 14th Street, behind the famous Klein's Department Store. The apartment was actually just one ratty "ground level" room, which turned out to be virtually underground. Leon recalls looking out the narrow horizontal window slit and seeing only ankles and shoes passing by. He also recalls a hot plate for cooking, and a glaring light bulb 'fixture' overhead. Rubin thinks that prostitutes previously used the room, because there were mirrors everywhere, including on the ceiling. They stayed in this 'apartment' for several weeks, while they looked for quarters that were more habitable.

To carry their belongings to the U.S., Rubin had built a large wooden crate with a hinged top, about three feet by three feet by six feet long. This crate was sturdy enough to have carried dishes, silverware, and crystal, but the total belongings they brought with them to the U.S. consisted of \$30 cash, a set of silver spoons, some Russian rubles, and, of all things, pillows and blankets. Their belongings probably weighed no more than 30 pounds, although the crate itself weighed over 100 pounds. Rubin used this crate for many years to store paint covers and work tools. Unsentimentally, he eventually threw out this memorable souvenir of their journey.

For months, Ida cried every night because she yearned for Israel, her life-long dream. Soon she cried for other reasons, as the infamous George Lincoln Rockwell and his American Nazi 'storm troopers' were goosestep marching in major U.S. cities, complete with swastika-emblazoned flags and armbands. His racist speeches were reminiscent of Hitler's rantings. She thought: "What kind of land have we come to, where Nazis are free to terrorize us again? What have I brought my children into? What if this evil Rockwell comes to power here, the way Hitler came to power in Germany? Everybody said Hitler was a lunatic also, yet he came to power." It took decades for Rockwell and his followers to decline to an insignificant group of misfits, although other anti-Semitic racists have replaced him.

Rubin soon got a job as a house painter, his old trade. Distant relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Kalish, invited the young Segal family to their apartment on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. At that time, the Grand Concourse was truly grand, an exquisite wide tree-lined esplanade modeled after Paris's Champs Élysée, surrounded by huge luxury apartment buildings. Mr. Kalish also invited the owner of a painting contracting business, Abe Perlin, to the dinner at the same time. Abe either liked Rubin or felt sorry for him, or just needed another worker, and hired him that very day. Later, after Mrs. Kalish and Mr. Perlin died, Mr. Kalish married Mrs. Perlin. Rubin soon turned into one of the best painters Mr. Perlin had.



Work was sparse and wages were low in 1949. Rubin's first salary was \$12 a day, minus deductions, but he did not have work every day. Painting was a seasonal occupation, and there were slow months when work was scarce. Even with a full workweek, Rubin was lucky if he took home \$50. Ida helped Rubin by lugging paint cans home from the store in her metal-wire grocery shopping cart. Rubin was a very hard, reliable, skilled, and honest worker, and was given the most demanding and artistic work. Rubin painted the penthouses of famous personalities such as Frank Sinatra, actor Hal March, singer Dorothy Collins, and others. These were famous and wealthy people, but Rubin usually got the best 'tips' and more considerate treatment from ordinary folks. One thing Rubin appreciated was plain drinking water, which not everyone thought to offer. Union rules dictated how much work any one painter could have. If Rubin had no work, or had a free weekend day, he would often take private jobs. Rubin often wound up working seven-day weeks, even when he developed painful back and knee problems.

One of the first purchases in the U.S. was an electric sewing machine, so Ida could make items for our family and earn some extra money by sewing for other people. She learned this skill in her youth but perfected it in the DP camps, through the Jewish training and educational organization ORT. Ida made clothing 'from scratch' or from store-bought patterns, did alterations, and even made drapes and upholstery. The earnings from these jobs helped, but Rubin and Ida watched their expenditures carefully, saving whatever they could. Ida often went food shopping in several supermarkets so she could buy the lowest-priced items in each one.

Soon the Segal and Kozlowski families found an apartment large enough for them all, so they could share the rent. It was in the East New York section of Brooklyn, at Pitkin Avenue and Essex Street. It was on the second floor, and 'the El', the famous New York elevated train, roared by within a few feet of the windows. This was a 'railroad apartment', not because it was near the train, but because the rooms were all lined up down a long hallway, like berths on a train. Altogether, nine people lived in the apartment, sharing one bathroom: Ida's parents, her brother Joseph, her sister Gloria, and cousin Joe. Cousin Joe became part of the family, as he had no other family in the U.S. The Nazis had annihilated his entire family, 9 people, except for one brother, who died in Lvye after the war. He lost his only sister during the liquidation of the Lvye ghetto. Another brother survived the ghettos and the work camps, but was then drafted by the Russian Army and died fighting the Germans.

Pitkin Avenue was one of the main streets of East New York, lined with stores, 'cafeterias', and apartments above the stores. One of their neighbors was a black family that lived in the apartment below theirs. These people were very helpful to their immigrant neighbors, and even graciously allowed them to use their telephone. Occasionally the children would watch TV at a neighbor's apartment. One of their Jewish neighbors owned an egg store (yes—a store that sold mostly eggs!), and Leon remembers watching TV in a back room of the '*maydele mit der eyer*'—the 'girl with the eggs'. At that time, there was not yet much to watch on TV, and programming was only several hours a day, on a few channels. None of the Segals spoke or understood English yet, but the TV was obviously a fascinating attraction anyway, and an educational experience.



Rosaline soon had a pet; a kitten that she dressed in doll's clothes and pushed around in a doll carriage someone gave her. Later, she would also dress her infant brother Aaron in doll's clothes. The children also had two pet pigeons that Rubin somehow got and put into a wooden cage that he made from fruit crates, placed in a window. Amazingly, one of the pigeons even laid an egg. On hot summer nights, Rosaline and Leon were allowed to sleep outside on the fire escape.

After further scrimping, saving and much very hard work, the Segals rented their own two-bedroom apartment at 509 Belmont Avenue and Miller Street. At that time, East New York was a nice neighborhood, but eventually it would turn into an urban blight. The apartment was on the third floor, and Rubin re-built the apartment in his "spare time", while still working as many as six days a week. Rosaline and Leon shared a bedroom, which was at most 10 feet by 10 feet. Rosaline wanted the room painted pink, and Leon wanted blue, so Rubin compromised on purple with multi-colored flowers stenciled on the walls. In September 1950, Leon was sent off to kindergarten, speaking not one word of English. Next year Leon was sent to the near-by Yeshiva and Mesifita Toras Chaim, and was speaking near-fluent English. Rubin and Ida somehow found money for tuition payments for this private school. Even then, and for years, if you asked Leon where they were heading, he would say: "We're on our way to *Eretz Yisroel*"—in Yiddish, of course.

Ida's siblings Gloria and Joe, and cousin Joe, moved into a nearby apartment with her parents, and the families would get together frequently, several times a week. The entire family joined a nearby large, attractive Orthodox synagogue on Elton Street. The synagogue had beautiful stained glass windows, and the ceiling was painted with colorful scenes from the Bible. Women sat separated from the men, of course. At the end of the High Holy Days, the children would collect dozens of the colored 'tickets' that signified the purchase of the holiday seats.

Now Rosaline and Leon sometimes watched TV across the street, with their friends Gerald and Leslie Rubin. The TV screen was a small circle, probably no more than 12-inches in diameter, mounted in huge wooden box-cabinet. One of the first luxury items Rubin and Ida indulged in was their own TV set, a 17-inch screen RCA-Victor mounted in a large, genuine mahogany cabinet, a true piece of heirloom furniture. The black-and-white TV occupied the center of the living room; color TV had not yet been invented. There was no other furniture for many more months, and so everyone sat on the floor to watch TV. The TV broke down frequently, and it took hours to test the dozens of tubes. TV broadcasts were all 'live', and still limited to several evening hours. Memorable shows included classics such as Milton Berle's Texaco Star Theater, Sid Caesar's Your Show-of-Shows, the Ed Sullivan Show, the Howdie Doody Show, the Kate Smith Show, Beat-the-Clock, the Jackie Gleason Show, the Colgate Comedy Hour, and the hilarious Amos-'n-Andy (Leon's favorite). A harsh punishment for the children was several days or even a week with no television. Luckily, Rubin was softhearted, and a sincere apology a day or two after the misbehavior usually 'lifted the cruel decree.' Amazingly, Ida never punished the children; she only threatened to tell Rubin of the children's misdeeds. That was enough for hours of tearful pleading.



When Rubin arrived in the U.S., he was a stranger to his few relatives living here. His closest relatives in the world were his mother's three sisters: his aunts Ida, Fanny, and Rhoda. They really did not know this young and needy refugee family thrust into their midst. Aunt Rhoda from Cleveland Ohio was perhaps the kindest of his aunts. She had sent 'CARE' packages to the Segalowicz family both before the war and later to the DP camps. Rhoda made *aliyah* to Israel before 1949, and so Rubin and Ida never even met her, but they communicated by letters. Telephone calls were costly, especially tricky overseas calls, and not everyone had phones in those days. In a turn of events, Rubin and Ida wound up sending packages of goods and food to her in Israel, where life was very hard for many years.

At their first encounters, Rubin's aunt Ida and uncle Morris Seltzer were not especially empathetic, but eventually they warmed up to their young relatives. Ida Seltzer taught Ida Segal new sewing techniques, and Morris took time to show the Segals the neighborhoods they should consider for a home, including the Midwood section of Brooklyn. Rosaline and Leon still remember many delightful days spent with the Seltzer family at their homes, including cousins Irving and his wife Rae and their children. Rae continues her good relationship with the entire Segal family to this day, and the Segals always remember her continued kindness and concern.

Rubin's aunt Fanny never developed any special feelings towards the Segals. Her husband was more sympathetic, and once gave Rubin several dollars, but whispered that Rubin should not mention it to Fanny. Fanny apparently felt Rubin was a burden she could do without or might have to support, even though Rubin never asked any of his relatives for money. Eight years later, Fanny apparently resented the fact that Rubin had managed to earn enough money for a Bar Mitzvah party for Leon. She intentionally never replied to the invitation, except for some rude and unkind words to her brother-in-law Morris. Fanny died from a chronic illness, and probably did not take much of her wealth with her.

In 1955, after years of hard work, Rubin and Ida saved enough money to buy a four-family house at 1351 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street, near Avenue M, in the pleasant Midwood section of Brooklyn. Rubin, the boy from Ivenets, had become a landlord in America! The block was a friendly mix of Jewish and Italian families. The electrified trolley and tracks were just being torn down on Coney Island Avenue, on the next street. Beautiful tree-lined Ocean Parkway contained a horseback-riding path going from Prospect Park to Brighton Beach. Leon was ten and Rosaline was eight years old, and there were many children their age in this neighborhood. On summer evenings, the street was full of people; street crime was absent. Into the year 2000, that neighborhood has remained attractive, as Orthodox Jews purchased and renovated homes, and built numerous modern Yeshivas and synagogues.

Soon the Segals were even able to go on their first vacation of sorts, renting some rooms in a large seaside house in Far Rockaway, NY. A family friend drove them there in their car, along with linens, dishes, and food. This may not have been much of a vacation for Ida, who still had to cook, make beds, and clean. At least, though, Rubin took more than two days off from work, and no one had to lug beach paraphernalia on trains. A few years later, the Segals went to a real hotel, the budget Central Hotel near Ellenville N.Y., in the pristine Catskill Mountains. At the



'budget' hotels, meals were served 'family style': large dishes of food were placed on the tables and guests helped themselves. Fancier hotels had menus, and waiters who served individual dishes. Budget hotels also had mostly shared bathrooms, which often led to interesting encounters. Within a few years, they were able to go to 'fancier' and well-known hotels, including the Hotel Carmel, the Loch Sheldrake Inn, and Klein's Hillside in Parksville, near Liberty. During summers, Leon worked in the region as a busboy and waiter at the Ridge Mountain Hotel near Liberty, and at the large and classy Homowack Lodge near Ellenville.

These were pleasant vacations for the Segal family, as they joined the nearly one million people, mostly Jewish, who came up to the Borsht Belt every summer. Many friends and relatives vacationed at the same or at nearby hotels, or at the numerous bungalow colonies that dotted the Catskill landscape. At the bungalow colonies, people cooked, cleaned and washed just as they did at home, but the greenery, cool nights, and swimming pools were a welcome change from the crowded and gritty city. At that time, the area was booming and attractive, and the entertainment at the hotels was usually good, if not always great. Sometimes the entertainers were world-class, for this was where Jerry Lewis, Alan King, Buddy Hackett, Don Rickles, and hundreds of other entertainment greats got their start. The food at the hotels was almost non-stop, with three large meals a day, midnight suppers, and the elaborate Friday evening *Shabbat* dinners, when several chicken dishes were always on the menu. The Borscht Belt experience enabled thousands of Jewish immigrants to become more spontaneously Americanized.

The Segals still had to be judicious and prudent with their limited income. Ida walked to three or four supermarkets to do her food shopping, buying sale items at each one. To save the cost of bus or train rides, the entire family would often walk miles to stores or shopping areas. Neither Leon nor Rosaline were allowed to buy a soft drink if they got thirsty on their treks, although a "nickel Coke" could actually be purchased for five cents. (Later, the cost of a 'small coke' would increase to ten cents. An interesting question at cafeterias was "How much is your nickel Coke?") The Segal family never went to restaurants—although eating out was not as common or popular as it is currently. At the end of every *Yom Kippur*, on their way home from *schul*, Rosaline and Leon would wonder what the long lines were for outside the Chinese restaurant. They had friends who often talked of going to restaurants with their families, especially for celebrations, but it was an unfamiliar world they were talking of. Leon had his first slice of pizza when he was perhaps thirteen years old, purchased for ten cents at a new pizzeria around the corner from his aunt Marcia's home. Leon never saw the inside of a real restaurant until he was in high school, when he took a college course requiring field trips, and then he lived mostly on grilled cheese sandwiches. Leon's first Chinese meal was with college friends, and then he ordered only 'chop suey'. Rosaline's first restaurant experience was at a friend's sweet-sixteen party. For whatever reasons, Rosaline and Leon rarely asked for what they knew they would not get. However, they did not miss what they did not experience, and they certainly had all the emotional and parental care that they could have asked for. It was probably not until many years later that they realized, or appreciated, the situation in which they grew up. After more years of very hard work, and making do with few luxuries or extravagances, the Segal family purchased their first car in 1960. It was a white



Plymouth Fury, the top of this economy-car line. The car was a 'demo', and it cost \$1,800. This was a big investment and a true luxury. The car was very long and easily sat six people, with huge tail fins that were then the height of styling. It also had a 'push-button' automatic transmission, a radio, but no air conditioning. In 1967, that Plymouth was given to Leon as a college graduation present. By then it was re-painted to 'faded blue', with almost 50,000 miles on it, and suffered from an aversion to humid conditions—it would often not start on damp days. That car though, with its cracked blue vinyl seats and steadfast Chrysler oil-burning V-8 engine, took Leon to graduate school in Illinois and back, and lasted until 1970.

During all these difficult early years, there were always many *tzedakah* (charity) boxes in the Segal and Kozlowski households. The boxes were from the children's religious schools, and from American and Israeli charities. The popular blue *Keren Kayemet* boxes held donations for the millions of newly planted trees and land redemption in the young State of Israel. *Bubbee* Leah not only gave to countless charities, she also collected '*tzedakah*' door-to-door. No doubt, she herself was just as needy as those she collected for. Each *Rosh Hashonah*, *Bubbee* Leah gave out Jewish calendars to all her children and grandchildren, received from her numerous charities, especially Yeshivas in Israel. The Segals also gave donations to synagogues, schools, the UJA (United Jewish Appeal), and other needy people. These people included those that Ida and Rubin brought over from Europe, and often literally "took in" to their crowded apartments, including relatives, acquaintances, and even strangers. In their home on East 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Rubin often rented apartments at reduced rents to other new arrivals from Europe. Eventually, *Bubbee* Leah had an apartment in this house also, after Chaim died. Packages of clothing and other goods went out regularly to Europe and Israel. Packing the goods as tightly as possible into the cardboard boxes became an evening's event for the entire family, and Rubin was always proud of how much he could squash into each box. The traditions of endless charity continue to this day.

In 1987, Tuvia Bielski died in Brooklyn, New York, and Rubin and Ida attended his funeral. They continue to be active in several Holocaust remembrance societies, including the Ivey Memorial Society. Rubin was the last president of the Ivenets Memorial Society, which had 500 people at its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party. It stopped its activities in the mid-1990s as its membership dwindled to less than a handful.

Many of Rubin's and Ida's friends and acquaintances were of course survivors of the ghettos and concentration camps. Leon remembers vividly the many people who had gruesome blue-black number tattoos on their forearms, the indelible concentration camp numbers burned in by the insanely meticulous Nazis. Rubin and Ida would sit around the table with their friends and exchange wartime experiences. Leon and Rosaline often sat by quietly, and listened in amazement. Unlike many survivors, Rubin and Ida believed that telling their stories to others, including their children, could help avoid another Holocaust. Both Rubin's sister Sonia and her husband Joe do not want to talk about their terrible experiences. Sonia says she would not believe them herself if she heard them.



## **A DREAM FULFILLED: At long last, — קִרָּא לְאֶרֶץ —The Land of Israel**

*America became a lasting home, but it took 15 years to finally fulfill the dream of going to Israel, the first of many visits.*

Rubin and Ida had two more children. Aaron Gary was born in 1954, after Ida's beautiful 21-year old sister Gloria (Gisheh) was killed. A drunken driver going the opposite direction to traffic killed her. Gloria had just left a dry-cleaning store where she went to pick up her brother's suit. She was planning to be engaged soon, to another Holocaust survivor. Gloria was our first family member to die in the U.S., and her death was a devastating loss for a family that had survived the horrors of war. Aaron Gary was named after Gloria, and after Ida's grandfather Aaron Lipchin. By now, Ida and Rubin could apparently afford to give their children middle names. Ida's brother Joe and his wife Dinah later named their daughter after Gloria also. Gloria had introduced them, but died six months before their marriage.

After a 15-year delay, after saving up enough money, Rubin and Ida were able to fulfill their lifelong dream. In 1964, they finally were able to 'return' to Israel for the first time, along with 10-year-old Aaron. This was much more than just a vacation; it was a homecoming. Friends and relatives saw them off at New York's Idlewilde (now Kennedy) Airport, and it was almost a party at the departure gate. In Israel, they stayed with friends and relatives who literally feuded over the opportunity of having Rubin and Ida stay with them. They joined the Independence Day parade and saw Israeli soldiers, tanks, and jets take part in the display of Jewish strength and freedom. What a contrast to the days where they were being hunted in the forests, fearing that they were the last surviving Jews in Europe. Since then, they have been to Israel many times, staying several weeks each time. They go sightseeing; visit friends and relatives; and make new friends. A favorite destination is the spa area near the rejuvenating Dead Sea salt baths.

David Harvey was born in 1966, and was named after Ida's father Chaim and her uncle Dave. Uncle Dave was the half-brother of Ida's father Chaim, and with his wife Jennie, helped bring many family members, including Rubin and Ida, to the U.S. Uncle Dave was the only one of Chaim's brothers who was not a blacksmith; he was a poor, hard-working sewing machine operator. Although *Tante* Jennie was Ida's aunt, the entire family called her Tante Jennie (*tante* is aunt in Yiddish). "*Tante* Jennie" and uncle Dave treated Rubin and Ida as part of their family. Both of these beloved people had a deserved reputation for generosity, kindness, and selflessness. On *Tante* Jennie's frequent visits to the Segal's, she always brought bags of homemade food and other goodies, hauling them on buses and trains.

*Tante* Jennie and uncle Dave had three sons, Heshie, Freddie, and Bernie. Jennie's entire family had been annihilated in Europe. Bernie recalls his parents' reactions to the news photos of war refugees: "We have to save our relatives. We can't let them live under those conditions". As poor as they were, they literally spent thousands of dollars to rescue their distant relatives. If anyone were to see their small, crowded apartment on 488 Powell Street in Brooklyn's Brownsville section, it would have been immediately obvious what kind of sacrifices these people made. Uncle Dave had to literally scrape together the \$100 or so necessary to pay for the '3<sup>rd</sup> class' overseas voyage of distant relatives, such as his orphaned nephew,



'cousin Joe' Kozlowski. Years later, he even helped bring Rubin's sister Sonia and her family over from England. {It is likely that Rubin could not sponsor Sonia's family's immigration as sponsors had to be U.S. citizens, which Rubin did not yet qualify for.} Uncle Dave is described in a 1948 'U.S. Migration Department' interview file for 'cousin Joe', as follows: "David Kozlowski turned out to be a plain man, seemingly quite kind-hearted, who was happy to have a child of his late brother with him. He was prepared to assume full responsibility for Josef."

Ida remembers meeting Bernie for the first time, while she was walking through the HIAS building only days after arriving in the U.S., with Leon and Rosaline in tow. Teenaged Bernie walked around the large building until he saw Ida, recognizing her from photos. He approached her, saying "*Du binst Chayka?!*" —"Are you Ida?" Bernie and all the Kozlowski children of course spoke perfect Yiddish, the main language of their parents during their entire lives. Bernie was compassionate and understanding beyond his young years. Leon and Rosaline always recalled how Bernie and his fiancée Bernice took them to museums, parks, the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, zoos, and other places that they had never seen or imagined before. Bernie still remembers the never-ending stream of questions from Leon, always in Yiddish. Questions like: "Why does the hippopotamus look like that?" followed immediately by: "How do you say hippopotamus in Yiddish?"

Leon and Patti's daughter Debbie (Devorah Esther) and their son Danny were both named after Uncle Dave, in memory of his renowned kindness and good nature. For Debbie's Bat Mitzvah, *Tante* Jennie gave her a beautiful locket and necklace, which Debbie put away for special occasions. Debbie died at the age of 17, the result of a car accident, and never got to wear the locket. *Tante* Jennie lived past the age of 99, and knew that many children were named after her dear husband.

Rubin's hard work in America has brought him the American dream. Today Ida and Rubin live in a one-family home in attractive Belle Harbor, Queens, close to Rosaline. Rubin and Ida's children are all professionals, and all have families of their own. Rosaline is a dental hygienist; Aaron is a dental surgeon; Leon is a Ph.D. Chemical Engineer; and David is a neurosurgeon. As Rosaline said: Their children turned out "not too bad." Rubin continues to help his children, not only in painting and reconstructing their homes, but also by always "being there". Rubin is also known for helping his neighbors and friends, of all religions. Rubin and Ida have been honored by the Emunah-of-America Zionist Organization for their work and contributions, and are active in various Holocaust Memorial organizations.

All of Rubin and Ida's children have visited Israel, and some have established close relations with their relatives there. All of Leon's children have been Bar and Bat Mitzvahed in Israel, at the mountain fortress of Masada. Leon and David have visited former concentration camps in Poland, in understanding of their family heritage, history, and struggle. All their children have Jewish spouses, and are active members of Jewish congregations. Their nine grandchildren (Debbie made ten) have been, or will be, Bar and Bat Mitzvahed, and will undoubtedly carry on the Jewish traditions and upbringing for which Rubin and Ida fought, for which their relatives and many others died, and for which Rubin and Ida survived. In December 2000, our family celebrated Rubin and Ida's 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.



## POSTSCRIPT

*By 2002, Rubin and Ida had four children, nine living grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. In April 2002, they visited Israel during a Palestinian 'uprising', while many people were too frightened to travel there. Leon received a message from a cousin in Israel saying: "Your parents are very brave people." They always have been.*

For years, Rubin and Ida endured tremendous physical and emotional hardships, believing that they would never live to see the next day. They never knew why they were chosen to live while others died. Now they believe there were purposes for their survival. They lived to sanctify the victims, to avenge the crimes against their people, and to tell their story. They want to make sure that another Holocaust never happens; to make sure that people, and our family, do not forget what they lived through. This story of their struggle and survival should help our descendants realize that none of us would be here if Ida and Rubin had not valiantly fought against the most vicious anti-Semitism in the history of man, and proudly triumphed.

Most images of the Holocaust do not portray Jewish victory. Many images are of Jews passively waiting to be killed, with shaved heads, often without clothing, without dignity. Other images are of Jews kneeling besides ditches, waiting timidly for bullets to be put into their heads; of masses of emaciated Jews being pushed into gas chambers; of 70-pound skin-covered skeletons being shoveled into crematoria, turning into smoke and ashes. Other images are of Jews being forced to eat pig's meat, or to burn prayer books. Rubin and Ida did not fit these images, and they did not fit what the Nazis expected. They had the will to defy evil and to win, sending a message to present and future generations. They survived in a manner that makes us proud to be Jews, and proud to be part of their family. How many families have true-to-life heroes in their midst, complete with miracles?

Rubin and Ida's unbelievable courage, faith in G-d, and love of Judaism remain as strong as ever. In April 2002, Rubin and Ida visited Israel again, to celebrate Passover with family and friends. Israel was then in the midst of a Palestinian 'uprising', notable for endless repugnant terrorist 'suicide bombings'. While other people were wary of traveling to Israel, Rubin and Ida went with uncompromising bravery and faith. Leon received a message from a cousin, 24-year-old Nir Yudovitch, who said: "To come at this time, your parents are very brave people."

Rubin and Ida personify the eternal triumph of Judaism. Many national and political empires have sought to subjugate or destroy Jews, Judaism, and Israel through the ages: Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Rome, Greece, the Spanish Inquisition, Czarist pogroms, the Ottomans, Britain, Communism, the Nazi Third Reich, and radical Arabs. None of these are significant entities any longer; none have thrived, while the Land of *Eretz Yisroel* has arisen and bloomed. Rubin and Ida talk modestly about their ordeals without boasting. Rubin and Ida are not only true heroes, they are also parents, grandparents, and people who have devoted their lives to their family, their heritage, and their convictions. Our family, our children and their descendants, are all here because of their bravery, courage, and faith.





## MEMORIES

### The Blake Avenue Market:

**Leon remembers-** Moderately sized supermarkets were widespread in the 1950's along with small family-owned grocery stores. However, the most interesting shopping experience was the weekly Blake Avenue pushcart market, a short walk from the Belmont Avenue apartment. It was exciting to go there on Sunday mornings and see the pushcarts lined up for many blocks, full of everything imaginable. The peddlers did not pay store rents, so prices were better than in the stores that lined the same street. Prices were drawn in black crayon on brown paper bags—'magic markers' did not exist yet. Leon especially enjoyed going to the market with Rubin, who would splurge on chocolate, nuts, and other such goodies that Ida either frowned upon as unhealthy, or did not buy because she did not want to spend money on these luxuries. Luckily, Rubin liked to *nasch* (snack) as much as anyone.

The foodstuffs were always fresh on Blake Avenue. In fact, many of the foods were alive. You could buy a two-foot long carp from a large fish tank, and either have it killed (by a whack to the head) and sliced up, or take it home wrapped in wet newspaper and have it swim in the bathtub until dinner time. Rosaline and Leon would watch the fish for an hour or two before it became dinner, usually part of the *gefilte* fish. Sometimes, when Ida cut the fish open, there would be another small fish inside, its last meal.

**Rosaline remembers-** I would accompany mom sometimes, and I especially remember the live poultry market. Mom picked out the chicken that she wanted to buy, and the *shochet* killed it by slitting it across the throat. It was then *flicked* (plucked) and the remnants of the feathers were removed by scorching the whole chicken over a gas flame. The choking, acrid stink of the seared feathers was like no other odor I can describe. It was terrible. When we took the fresh, whole chicken home, mom opened it up, and many times, we found eggs inside the chicken. Sometimes the eggs were still without a hardened shell; they were only soft yellow balls held together by a tender sac. Mom would gently slide these eggs, only yolks actually, into the soup she was cooking. The soft cooked yolks were tasty and special treats. I doubt if there are any restaurants in America, or anywhere in the world, where such a delicacy can be obtained today.

Speaking of eggs, we should not forget the famous 'guggle muggle' (the 'u' sounds as in 'jug'). Mom gave these thick, protein-filled drinks to us when we were sick. Ingredients: raw egg yolk, honey, and hot milk, stirred briskly with a spoon. It may not sound so tasty, but this thick and sweet drink actually tasted very good.



Blake Ave. pushcart market



### **At Brighton Beach:**

**Rosaline and Leon remember-** On hot summer weekends, we would often go to Brighton Beach, joining dozens of family friends, relatives, and other *landsleit* at Brighton Beach, Bay 5. Many 'greener' (greenhorns) gathered here, and at adjoining Coney Island. The *schlep* to the Beach was no picnic. We did not have a car, and the subway ride took over an hour, with two train changes, in a train car packed with other sweaty beach-goers. When we moved to East 10<sup>th</sup> Street, the train ride to the beach took only 35 minutes or so, plus the 10-minute walk to the train station. Sometimes our uncle Morris and aunt Marcia would take us in their car, a luxurious blue DeSoto. In that case, the ride was 20 minutes but it took another 20 minutes to find a parking spot, and then we would walk at least a half-mile to the beach.

Subway trains were not air-conditioned, and the temperature inside was well over 100-degrees. When the train made the final slow turn into the elevated Brighton Beach station, several hundred passengers disembarked. By the time the last people walked down from the platform, the next train pulled in with another horde of beach-goers. Everybody in the family carried something. We carried lunch, snacks, blankets, towels, pails, shovels, and other paraphernalia, including a one-gallon metal drink cooler. Lightweight plastics were not available yet, and Rosaline thinks this was a two-ton cooler. Lunch was always thick, stuffed sandwiches, which usually wound up with real sand in them. Wood and canvas beach chairs and umbrellas were available for rent for \$1 or so, but we never wasted money on such things. We dug holes, made sand castles, or played in the waves.

The sand was usually so hot that we had to wear shoes to walk to "our area", close to the ocean. By noontime, the beach blankets were so close to each other it was hard to walk around them. We used to stay in the water until our lips turned blue, and we often came home with second-degree sunburns and blisters because the suntan lotion was not waterproof. Our uncle Morris had very light skin and freckles, and burned in an instant, so he sat on the blistering beach in a chair beneath an umbrella, unbelievably wrapped in towels from head to foot. Only his eyes showed, and he looked like a sweating mummy cooking in the sun.

For a treat, we were allowed one ice cream each from the vendors who walked on the sand, carrying their metal freezers on their backs, filled with ice cream and dry-ice packing. To this day, whenever Rosaline sees a creamsicle, the orange and vanilla bar on a stick, she thinks of Bay 5, Brighton Beach. This was the highlight of the day, and was only allowed AFTER the lunch and fruits and other 'healthy foods' were eaten. Occasionally, we might go up to the boardwalk to buy a 'frozen custard' (Carvel's predecessor), an Italian ice, or a knish as a special indulgence. These items cost 20 or 25 cents or so, probably the equivalent of \$2 today, and this was a relative extravagance, since Mom could buy a whole half-gallon of ice cream in the store for not much more. We do not remember Mom ever buying an ice cream for herself, but Rubin had a sweet tooth, and he would indulge in an ice cream at the beach.



### **Summers in the City:**

**Leon remembers-** I never went to camp, and if I were offered the opportunity, I probably would have declined. But I never had a dull or boring summer because there were always so many other children around. For recreation, we would play street games such as punch ball, stick ball (played with broom handles), catch, king-queen, stoop-ball, skelly (played with bottle caps), basketball, soccer, and Johnny-on-the-Pony. This was a rough game, and sometimes kids got hurt. Eight or more boys would form two teams, and the first team would form a 'pony' by bending over and locking their arms around each other's hips. The opposing team would run and jump onto the backs of the first team, trying to collapse the horse. The heaviest boy would jump last, after the horse was loaded. I was heavy, and would be near the last to jump. I don't know if my mom ever saw me play this game, since I don't remember her telling me to stop.

Other games included girls, such as jacks, hit-the-penny, hide-and-go seek, jump rope, hopscotch (potsy), board games (Monopoly, Sorry, Scrabble) and card games such as canasta. Rosaline liked to roller-skate, a pastime I gave up after falling on my pride the first time I tried. We also shared our first bicycle, a blue Ross girl's bike, which was a true luxury, since it was bought new. On truly hot summer days, we were sometimes allowed to buy an ice cream from the Good Humor or Bungalow Bar trucks that jingled down the streets. The Bungalow Bar trucks had real shingled roofs. As a prank, children would sometimes call for the ice-cream trucks to back-up after they were halfway down the street, then ask the driver a question like "What time is it?", but not buy anything. Ha-ha.

**Rosaline remembers-** I always worked summers if I could find a job. When I was 11 or 12 years old I got jobs as a 'mother's helper'. One summer I worked for a divorced woman on the block. I watched her children all day while she was at work. When I was 14, I started to work in B. Altman's department store. My best friend was Joanie Wallach, and her step-mom got me the job. Joanie was a great person, and we were like sisters for many years. She had an unhappy childhood, was from a divorced home, and several times she spent months at a time in our house when the situation at her home was bad for her. My parents took her in the same way they took in relatives or friends. Joanie, Leon, and I would spend hours playing scrabble or canasta. My other friends were Barbara, Max, and Linda.

### **Up On the Roof: Tar Beach:**

**Rosaline and Leon remember-** In the summers, we sometimes could not go to the beach on hot days. Our house on E. 10<sup>th</sup> St. had a flat tar-covered roof. We would go up to the roof, along with a blanket, baby-oil or suntan lotion, and a portable radio. We would fry there for 2 or 3 hours in 95-degree weather, listening to the radio, and talking. It must have been more fun than it sounds today, since we did this frequently.



### **Living in East New York:**

East New York was a very pleasant Brooklyn neighborhood into the 1950s. There was little crime, and children walked and played anywhere at all hours. In the summers, people filled the streets until late at night, as few people had air conditioning. In later years, this neighborhood followed an unfortunate trend and deteriorated drastically. As Jewish residents prospered, they moved to better neighborhoods and private homes. The new residents, mostly poor minorities, brought their own street problems with them. The area eventually became a dangerous urban blight, with deteriorating buildings, ethnic gangs, and crime.

A subway ride away from the Segal's apartment, or a long walk away, was a large discount store selling a huge variety of household goods. It was Fortunoff's, always jammed with people from all over New York. If you did not want to go to the market, a deliveryman from a local Brooklyn dairy farm, such as Sheffield's Farms, could deliver fresh milk and cream to your door in thick glass bottles. Seltzer in metal-capped glass spritz bottles was also delivered door-to-door. The deliver men would carry two wooden cases of seltzer bottles up as many flights of stairs as necessary. Many things were sold door-to-door: cleaning goods by the Fuller brush men, encyclopedias, cutlery, and Electrolux vacuum cleaners, among other things. These salesmen did not telephone before their arrival, as not everyone had phones, and door-to-door selling was a full-time profession. An early investment the Segals made from such a salesman was a complete set of the prestigious Encyclopedia Britannica, an expensive investment costing hundreds of dollars.

### **Bubbee Leah:**

Chaim and Leah were the only grandparents that Leon, Rosaline, and Aaron knew. David only knew Bubbee Leah, as Chaim had died before he was born. Leah's grandchildren recall '*bubbee* Leah' as soft-spoken, kind, and generous, who always had treats for them whenever they visited. Leon remembers the *schtaskes* (peanuts) and raspberry soda she always bought especially for him. Soda was a treat, and not a staple item in the Segal household, because Ida believed it was not as healthy as juices and milk. In later years, *bubbee* Leah would bring out chocolate bars and candies for her great-grandchildren every time they visited, even before they got their coats off. Bubbee contributed to numerous Jewish charities, even though she was a poor woman herself. When family members traveled away from home, *bubbee* Leah's parting words, an implicit blessing, were always: "*Gey gezundt un kum gezundt*"—"Leave healthy and return healthy."

### **Zaydee Chaim:**

Chaim's grandchildren all called him *zaydee* ('grandpa'). Chaim was a big man, mostly bald, and very religious. Rosaline remembers that *zaydee* would often bring her chocolate covered jellies in a brown paper bag, a treat she loved. He would then rub her back in a 'special way'. Chaim suffered from a series of debilitating strokes several years after arriving in the U.S., and from then on communicating with him became unpredictable, and difficult. He eventually spent a long time in a nursing home, and often did not recognize family members when they came to visit. Leah took care of him during his many tiring years of physical and mental suffering, although Leah was not completely well herself.



### **Our Relatives:**

**Rosaline remembers—Joe, Dinah, Morris-** I remember when Joe and Dinah were married and lived around the corner from *Bubbee* and *Zeyde*. I used to visit them all the time. Dinah let me try on her high-heeled shoes and play her accordion. In return, I helped her feed Philip, who was the worst eater in the world. We used to put him on the clothes dryer to eat, so the spin-cycle vibrations would distract him.

I remember when a friend of our family, Gedalya, gave me a doll and some clothes. I was so happy. We had a large meal at their house, and then my uncle Morris drove all of us home in his blue DeSoto. I always got carsick and nauseous, and on this hot summer day, I had a full stomach. I started to throw up in the car, and my Mom stuck this beautiful red felt hat that I just got under my face to catch the vomit. My uncle Morris smelled the vomit and got nauseous and sick himself, and he had to pull over. We had to throw the soggy and smelly red hat away, and then we all watched uncle Morris throw up. To this day, we never heard the end of this story.

Our family friend Gedalya was also the main character in another unforgettable family sketch. Our families made plans to meet at the Bronx Zoo one Sunday, as Gedalya's family had never visited this great attraction. Gedalya asked Rubin what to bring for lunch, and Rubin jokingly told him: "You'll get very hungry from all the walking, so bring everything in your refrigerator." At the zoo, we saw Gedalya, his wife, and two daughters walking towards us with two giant bags each of food. He had taken Rubin at his word, and literally emptied out his refrigerator, bringing everything to the zoo.

### **Gloria Kozlowski and others:**

**Rosaline remembers-** Aunt Gloria bought me my first pair of roller skates, I must have been six years old. She also visited us when we had the mumps, and played with us.

**Leon remembers-** Gloria was a very pretty young girl, always smiling. I remember her boyfriend, Walter, who we all thought she was going to marry. They would kid around in *Bubbee's* living room, and Gloria laughed a lot. One evening, we all came home from a day of shopping at Klein's Department Store. As we opened the door to our apartment, arms full of packages, the telephone was already ringing. We found out that Gloria had died in a car accident minutes ago. Rosaline and I cried very hard, and we both threw up. I often think of Gloria to this day.

I also think of my cousin Kenneth many times. He was Marcia and Morris's first son, who died of leukemia as a very young boy. He was a beautiful, lively, and energetic boy with curly blonde hair, bright blue eyes, and pink cheeks. His father Morris liked dogs, and bought Kenny a puppy he named Friskie. Kenny literally dragged this dog around on a leash, and the dog kept on spitting up.

**Marcia remembers Gloria-** Gloria never cried during the days in hiding or in the ghetto. When I think of little Gloria silently picking lice from her hair while we hid in the bunker, I still cry.



## **Effects of The Holocaust:**

**Leon remembers-** In the early years, our mother often had nightmares. I would sometimes hear crying and frightful screams in the middle of the night. The next morning I sometimes asked what happened, and she told me it was a dream about the war, or the partisans, or the killings. I eventually stopped asking, because I knew what caused the nightmares. Our parents frequently talked about wartime experiences, about battles, friends who lived, and those who died. I now wish I had recorded all of my parents' stories, not realizing then the value of what I was listening to. Some of my parents' friends had gone through concentration camps, and had tattooed numbers burned on their arms. My parents had so many close friends because of what they lived through together. One of their friends is Henne Scheinerman, a very friendly and attractive woman. She had a streak of natural white hair on her head. Amazingly, her hair had turned white overnight during one especially traumatic experience. A neighbor of ours, Faye Gewertzman, had been in several concentration camps. I doubt if any of these people, including my parents, actually talked about all of their experiences. I believe some were too horrible, overwhelming, or humiliating to talk about.

When Patti and I first went to Israel, we left Debbie and Neal with my parents. It was a great trip, the sights were unforgettable, and *Yad Vashem* was more upsetting than I anticipated. I remember thinking about how many relatives we lost, how our family was decimated. Unexpectedly, the best time we had was with our distant relatives, who we did not know before this visit. A special highlight was seeing *bubbee's* sister Neche, who reminded us of *bubbee*. After over 30 years in Israel, she spoke mostly Yiddish. On several visits, I took absolutely terrific morning walks with my camera all around Jerusalem's walled Old City, just as the sun was rising. I doubt if such a walk would be safe today. For Debbie's Bat Mitzvah trip, we left 5-year-old Danny with my parents, and when we returned, he would not leave my parents. At Neal's Bar Mitzvah at Masada, 9-year old Danny stood like a lookout on top of the stone walls, wearing an Israeli Army cap. It was a great sight.

In my career, I traveled all over the world, and I was always open about my heritage. Sometimes, I think my religion even helped, because Jews are apparently unusually respected in certain countries, sort of a reverse discrimination. In Germany, I had several unexpectedly good experiences with some Germans who wanted to let me know that they were trying to make up for the 'sins of their fathers'. My broken Yiddish came in handy too. Overall though, I never felt totally comfortable in Germany, especially when I met people who could have been near adulthood during the war. I wondered what they did, or knew, during the war.

My life was different than that of other children who were not children of survivors. Bloody war stories, and tense parents, were a routine part of my life. My father was especially nervous for many years. When I was very young, I remember being preoccupied with war, soldiers, dying, and the army. Being the child of Holocaust Survivors has affected me tremendously. It has made me more appreciative of the inner strength of Holocaust survivors; it has made my parents my personal heroes, and it has made me devoted to Israel and to Judaism.



## **RUBIN'S 80<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY**

### **Rosaline's Poem:**

July 15, 2000

We came to New York in '49  
On the Marine Jumper, not quite a luxury line.  
There was mom, dad, Leon, and me,  
We came to the land of the brave and the home of the free.  
Where we were safe and warm each night,  
And did not have to fear for our lives or to fight.

Our family lived on Essex Street  
Where life was hard, yet bittersweet.  
We all lived together in one railroad flat.  
Bubby, zayde, Aunt Gloria, Uncle Joe, Cousin Joe, my parents  
Leon, me and more than one cat.  
Lee and I were kids, we liked it just fine  
But dad, you worked day and night and we moved out in a short time.  
We moved nearby, on our own  
I believe we even had a telephone!

Then along came Aaron, who I dressed up as a girl as we laughed with glee.  
Then years later David arrived to complete our family tree.  
When we bought our homes dad was there,  
With his tools, paint and brushes he worked with care  
He plastered, painted and made fancy designs,  
And let's not forget his signature gold lines!!

When we went on vacation,  
    you and mom watched the boys and said it was no chore  
Why then when we returned, were your bags packed and waiting at the door???  
You have five great grandchildren, 9 grandchildren and Debbie was 10,  
Could you possibly have thought back then,  
As you were crossing the Alps after your liberation,  
That we would all be here today for this celebration?

With Love, your daughter      Roz





## **IDA & RUBIN'S 60<sup>th</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

by Rosaline, Nov. 2002

Sixty years, how time has flown,  
Here we are, a family full grown.  
With brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren  
                    And great-grandchildren too.  
Who are all here to wish a Happy Anniversary to you.  
So we raise our glasses and wish you the best,  
And all hope to follow in your footsteps.



### **Leon's Speech:**

*Later published in the 'New Jersey Jewish News', June 14, 2001, Father's Day issue.*

### **To My Father on His 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday    July 15, 2000**

Rosaline (my sister) advised me to keep my speech short and sweet. I thought about that, and I usually don't make long speeches anyway. BUT, since this is my Dad's 80th birthday, I decided that my only limitation should be to keep this to no more than one minute per year, which amounts to 80 minutes. Sorry, Roz.

A few weeks ago, I started preparing some words to say here, —both to my father and about my father. The words turned into many pages within just several minutes, and I had too many thoughts for me to talk about here. So I will say a lot fewer words than I'd like, and that hopefully won't be repetitive with what is being said by others. And while it's my father's birthday, a lot of what I say applies to both of my parents. What do you expect?, since my parents have known each other for almost 70 years. Much of what I'll say neither my father nor my mother has ever heard from me before, as some of these words do not come readily during everyday conversations. So it's about time they heard them.

It's sad that most children probably don't realize until late in life, often too late, how irreplaceably important and valuable parents are. I think that most children generally take the very difficult parental job, the sacrifices, and the contributions of parents for granted—maybe giving at most just some passing thought on Father's day or Mother's day. That is probably common, and may even be natural. Eventually, most children may even wish to be independent to the point of thinking they don't need their parents after a certain age. I doubt if there are many young adults who actually stop to think about the role of their father and mother in their life, about their parents' personal lives, histories, concerns, plans, or problems, or about their parents' dreams for the future. And I really doubt if many children give much thought to what their lives would be like without their parents.

I bring this up because my father lost his father when he was 9 years old, and lost his mother not long afterwards—so he knows what it's like to live most of his life without parents. In fact, the opposite of most people of my generation, my father actually has never known what it is like to grow up with parents. I know that my father never wished for his independence from his parents.

During most of my adult life, certainly from my twenties on, I always thought that I did not take my parents for granted. And I always thought I was pretty much aware of what they lived through, and what they did and sacrificed for their children. But something always happened that made me realize anew that I was not fully aware or appreciative enough of how much my parents meant to me, of how much they did for me, and of how much they taught me. There were several distinct stages and events in my life that always made me admire and appreciate my parents more and more, even to this week, even to this day.



I think the first event in my life that made me appreciate my father, and my mother, significantly more was when Patti and I started having children. While we tended to their illnesses, their growing-up pains, and their problems, I realized how my parents must have felt tending the typical trials and tribulations I put them through. And I'm sure I put them through enough to make their life interesting.

Later on, when Patti and I started to save money for a house and for our children's education, I frequently wondered exactly how my parents managed to meet all of their family's needs on what my father had been making, especially in the early days. In my father's first job in this country, in 1949, with two children to support, my father made \$12 a day GROSS, less deductions, and he did not have work every day. But my parents always managed to have enough for our family's wants, for a comfortable home, for savings, for a rainy day, and always something for charities and for other needy people. I remember the packages of clothing and other goods my parents continually sent out to distant relatives and friends in Europe and Israel, even while struggling themselves. I remember the families and friends and even strangers that my parents not only 'brought over' from Europe, but put-up in our already crowded apartment until they got settled.

We even had enough for some luxuries. I remember that one such luxury was a new bicycle that I shared with Rosaline when I was ten years old—a blue girl's bike. That was a luxury back then, and I know that for us to get that modest item, my parents sacrificed something, or they both had to work extra hours or extra days. I remember well my father working six and even seven days a week, at a physically demanding job that I could not be able to do for even several hours.

The next event that made me reflect, realize and appreciate my father's unique life was when we first visited Yad Vashem in Israel. Again, I always thought I knew what my father had gone through. I heard his stories, and all my life I read all that I could and was very aware of many details of the Holocaust. And while, like many people, I was choked up with tears and wordless after exiting Yad Vashem, I recall that during my first, and even later visits, my mind went immediately to my father's family, most of whom were annihilated during the war. I thought of the aunts and cousins, and grandmother, that I could have had, but did not....and I thought of my father, who lost all this. I remember many times since then thinking that my father must be a special person to have survived, and lived anything near a 'normal' life. Let alone that he lost his father at the age of nine years, but to then viciously lose his mother, two sisters, an infant niece and nephew, and most of the rest of his family to the Nazis while still a teenager. — I still marvel at my father's resilience, and we often talk about it within my own family. But probably not enough.

One of the next events in my life that made me appreciate my father's spirit and ability to overcome adversity was when Patti and I lost our dearest Debbie, at the age of just 17. It was and remains the most most tragic event in our lives, from which there is no recovery.... I often again wondered in amazement how my father, and others in his family, and other people that I know are in this room today, endured and managed to cope with the losses of their own beloved family members who were taken away before any natural time. Many of those people, including my father, set an example for me in how they courageously overcame their tragedies.



They taught me to not give up, to have hope for the future, to trust in the faith that has allowed Jews to survive through the centuries, and to believe that there was a reason for continued existence. And then, after Darren (our 8-year old) arrived, and as we now look forward to grandchildren and hopefully more *naches* from our Neal and Danny, and Darren, we believe that our confidence in our Jewish faith has been, and will continue to be, rewarded.

Then, only several years ago, after 50 years of thinking that I knew most of my father's history, another series of events totally renewed and reshaped my appreciation and understanding of both my parent's lives. As a youngster, from four years old on, I clearly remember my parents talking about their wartime experiences in the Russian Partisans with their friends and relatives. I always sat by and listened in amazement. It was always more thrilling than any movie, because it was full of excitement, suspense, brave exploits, and it was real, and personal. And I knew I'd always like the ending, because my father was there to talk about it.

In my youth, I sometimes heard anguished cries and screams in the middle of the night coming from my parents' room. I thought I knew what generally caused the screams—nightmares coming back to haunt them.

But the audio and video tapes that my parents recorded not long ago for several Holocaust remembrance foundations were amazing in the level of detail and emotion, and new exploits that I never heard about before, or had forgotten. I remember there were many episodes in which my father narrowly, miraculously, and almost unbelievably escaped death, repeatedly being outnumbered and surrounded by Nazis, and often being the only survivor of his group. I remember one incident in which my father's unit was surrounded and outnumbered by Nazis at nightfall, with his back to a river, definitely expecting to die the next morning. The river miraculously froze overnight, froze thick enough so his group was able to cross over the water and escape. They truly walked on water!! I remember another episode in which my father could not join his troop on an assigned mission because he had a swollen foot, the result of mosquito bites. His entire troop was killed. He survived because of mosquito bites!

But the stories I loved to hear the most were the ones in which my father and his young Jewish Partisan troop defeated and killed the Nazis, outnumbered and outgunned though they were. There were lots of such stories too, and my father and his small unit killed thousands of the enemy. My father killed with explosives, blowing up trains and bridges. He killed with guns and bullets, or with knives, often with captured weapons. He killed by the strength in his hands and the hatred in his heart. I still relish the thought of a 23-year-old, five-foot tall orphan, coming out victorious against overpowering odds, against the ultimate evil empire, in true David and Goliath manner. But there was a price to pay for these victories.

I remember that in one tape the interviewer asked my father how he felt about all the men, the Nazis and others, that he had killed for survival, self-defense, or retribution. In my view, each person my father killed actually saved hundreds of lives, the lives that would have been extinguished by the Nazis he killed. My father, who justifiably had killed literally hundreds of men, many face-to-face, became



speechless. Then he started to sob, and then he started to cry. He said, slowly and with difficulty, in between his sobs and tears:

**“I...never...WANTED....to....kill....ANYBODY. I did what I was forced to do.”**

**Ida whispered to the interviewer. “He was a true hero. How often have you seen a heroic man cry?” I listened, and tears came to my eyes.**

And most amazing to me, much of this he had done while barely older than a teenager. By the time my father was 26 years old, while young men of that age today are worrying mainly about girls, good times, and self-indulgence, often with little responsibility, convictions, or direction, my father had completed a life-time of unbelievable exploits and accomplishments. But few people would envy him those experiences and achievements. He was without parents or immediate family, and did not even know where his mother and sisters were buried, or if they were buried anywhere. He was without money, without schooling, had survived a brutal and bloody war with emotional and physical scars. He was a father of two children, had in-laws and other relatives to be responsible for, and was soon to be in a new land, speaking no English. And while young men of today may think little of the families they do have, my father was able to think only of the family he did NOT have.

And the last event that made me appreciate my father, and my mother even more, extended continuously from my youth to the present, even to this very week. Whenever Patti and I needed advice, when we needed wisdom or experience, when we had problems to discuss, our first stop was never our Rabbi, never a psychologist, never Dr. Spock. It was always my father and my mother, who were always there with the best advice.

I know for a fact that my father never expected to survive; that he definitely did not expect to ever even reach the age of 20 or 30, let alone 80. So this is why this occasion is so meaningful to us, why it's more than just a routine birthday party.

Pop, how you did all this I don't really know. I can't imagine anyone accomplishing what you have, in the manner that you did. Maybe someday I'll write a book—I've been saying that for years, but we're getting closer, thanks to David [my brother]. But like the stories of others in our family, of my aunts and uncles, and of our relatives in Israel, few people would believe such a book to be fact, not fiction.

Pop,...and Mom too, from you I've learned much more than I learned from my many years of schooling. You taught me by example the value and meaning of the work ethic, responsibility, respect for the wisdom of elders, love of learning, and charity (that's *tzedakah* to some of us). You taught me to be honest and truthful. You certainly taught me about what 'sacrifice' means. You taught me the value and love of Judaism, and Zionism, and our Jewish heritage, so important to our entire family, and how that faith can not only help you survive, but can reward you in the end. By example, I learned from you about family values, and how to survive in the face of adversity, and to uphold principles in which you believe.



And speaking of learning, I know and learned that even the reprimands and punishments you've meted out to me over the years, and I got my share, (and I probably deserved at least forty percent of them), you did with the best interests of your children at heart. You taught me the difference between right and wrong. None of this learning is available in any book, school, or university that I know about.

I hope that whatever *tzores* I may have caused you over the years are by now diminished in your memory, or at least are very small in comparison to the pleasures that come from our *simchas*, and from your grandchildren—and someday, maybe from my grandchildren.

So, Pop, after your 80 years and over 50 years on my part, —I'm still admiring you more every day.

You are not only the best father I could ever have wished for, you are my hero, the man I admire most in the world, a person I can only hope to emulate, but know that I never can.

And we appreciate and love you.

*Leon*



## **Marcia (Kozlowski) Albert**

*Marcia Kozlowski was too young to join the partisans when the war started. She was put to work for the Germans, and escaped from the doomed Ivye ghetto with her sister Ida just days before it was liquidated.*

Marcia Kozlowski was born on May 12, 1927 in the tiny Byelorussian village (*dorf*) of Mishukovitz, the third youngest of four children. Her two older siblings were Chaya (Ida) and Joseph; Gisheh (Gloria) was her younger sister. Marcia's mother Chana Leah (Lipchin) came from the large *shtetl* (town) of Karelich. Her father Chaim came from a very devout family who lived and worked around Ivye and Mishukovitz. Almost all the Kozlowski men were blacksmiths. Leah and Chaim's marriage was 'arranged', because Leah's father liked the hard-working, religious Chaim, even though at the age of 28 he was already considered an old bachelor.

Mishukovitz was a poor, quiet, desolate village set in the wooded countryside. There were perhaps 40 families in the entire *dorf*, less than 200 people. Some homes were situated along the nameless main street, while other homes were dispersed in the surrounding woods. The *dorfs* were all so small that they had no schools or stores. Mishukovitz was closely associated with the well-known *shtetl* (town) of Ivye, 6 miles away. Relatives from the larger towns sometimes sent their children to stay "in the country" with the Kozlowski family during summer vacations.

Marcia's first memories were of living in a rather small house, with a small barn in the back yard that held one cow. Twelve chickens roamed the unfenced yard and laid eggs on the ground, which were collected daily. Water was obtained from a nearby well, and heated in a pot in the fireplace. There was an outhouse in the back yard; indoor toilets did not exist even in Ivye. Marcia's widowed paternal grandmother, Sara Doba Kozlowski, also lived with them. The Kozlowski family was the only Jewish family in this tiny hamlet, which not a pleasant situation. The children did not like this desolate village, and Leah never got used to living "in the sticks". However, Chaim owned the only blacksmith shop in the village, and managed to earn a meager livelihood here. Marcia recalls most of their neighbors as being poor, decent, and good people. Their next-door neighbors were Sasha and Vincent Minko. Fortuitously, Sasha was very fond of the Kozlowski children.

Marcia's father Chaim worked very hard in his smithy shop on all days except Shabbat and Wednesdays, which was the important market day in Ivye. On Wednesdays, Chaim would walk the 6 miles to the market, carrying a heavy sack of forged metal goods to sell---axes, scythes, hammers, and horseshoes. If he was lucky, he sold his goods and carried a lighter load home. Since there was no *schul* in tiny Mishukovitz, Chaim prayed at home every day. As religious as Chaim was, his departed father was even more so, a true Jewish *tzadikh* (scholar).

Leah was a frail woman who always worked hard. Leah was up at sunrise every day, and worked in the garden, barn, and house. Sometimes the children helped with the chores. Leah also worked as a seamstress on a mechanical treadle-powered Singer sewing machine, a skill she learned from her own mother. There was no electricity in Mishukovitz until after 1945, but the family could not have afforded an electric sewing machine anyway. Leah made clothes, bedding,



pillowcases, and other goods to sell, as well as items for her family. Marcia's grandmother Sara also worked a little, selling candies and other small items purchased in Ivye. Nobody earned much money through these selling endeavors.

The Kozlowski family was poor by most standards, but the children did not feel deprived. Chaim and his brother Yitzhak (Isaac) even owned a house in Ivye, which they rented out to earn a small income. There was always food to eat, with the milk, chickens, eggs, and vegetables they raised, and nobody ever went hungry. They had adequate clothing, and they even had shoes that were purchased from a shoemaker. They also bought their firewood instead of cutting it themselves. The family's house was a plain wooden building, with virtually no luxuries or fancy furnishings other than the ubiquitous samovar. The large central fireplace heated the entire home. Marcia does not remember any birthday celebrations, although wealthy children may have had birthday parties. As Marcia says: "We never knew about birthdays". All Jewish holidays were celebrated, though. On Chanukah, the family lit the menorah and played with *dreidels*, and Marcia remembers receiving occasional Chanukah gifts of 10 *groshen* (Polish coins, worth less than a penny) from one of her uncles. For five *groshen*, one could buy an ice cream or a chocolate bar. Marcia had one rag doll that her mother made.

Marcia remembers each *Shabbat* meal being festive and especially happy, with a white tablecloth and Shabbos candles brightening up the home. The Shabbat meal usually included chicken, soup, and freshly baked *challah* and cake. There was even fresh fish bought from a peddler, caught in the river near the *shtetl* of Mikalaiveh. Another especially happy memory was Marcia's grandmother Sara Doba, who was extremely affectionate and loving, always hugging and kissing Marcia. Marcia shared a bed with her grandmother, and Marcia always looked forward to coming home from school to spend time with her. As was the case with many families in similar circumstances, Chaim and Leah were so busy making a living that they had little time for playing with the children or displays of affection. In fact, Marcia always considered that Ida, only 5 years older, almost raised her like a mother, since Leah was so pre-occupied with her daily chores and labors.

Marcia's schooling was a nomadic and lonely life that few would envy. Tiny Mishukovitz had no school at all, let alone a Jewish school. Therefore, Marcia first went off to the Hebrew school in Ivye, living with her aunt Rivka Baksht for the first 3 years of school, just as Ida had done before her. When her older brother Joe stopped school at the age of 13, Marcia went to take his place with their relatives in Karelich, going to another Hebrew school. In Karelich, Marcia lived with her aunt Chana Gershovitz, a very poor woman with four young sons. Marcia remembers their small house was noisy, and lots of fun. Marcia was supposed to have stayed with her grandparents, Leah's parents Aaron and Bella Lipchin, but their large house had burnt down a short time before Marcia arrived. Aaron never really rebuilt the house, he just added a roof to the undamaged basement, and the family lived virtually underground. Aaron also made part of the basement into his shoemaker shop. Marcia ate all her meals at her grandparents' house, because Chana was so poor. The two homes were only five houses apart, but it felt strange to sleep in one house and eat a short distance away. Her grandfather Aaron was a strict, religious, and unaffectionate man, and watched Marcia's friends to make sure



she associated with 'the right people'. Bella was Aaron's second wife, and had no children of her own, but Marcia remembers her as extremely affectionate and loving. Both the Gershovitz and Lipchin families eventually died in the mass killings.

Changing schools so often was trying for a shy country girl, and it was hard to make new friends every few years. Marcia missed her home, her brother and sisters, and her wonderful grandmother. Marcia only came home from school on summer vacations and on Passover. When she returned to school, she always carried food to help the family with whom she stayed. The last pre-war school that Marcia attended was in Ivye, where Marcia and Ida went to school together. Here they stayed as boarders in a house owned by the father of Ida's girlfriend (Eshke Levin). To save rent, they shared the room with a third person, a stranger.

When the Russians occupied the region in 1939, 12-year-old Marcia's life changed immediately. Even though Chaim's business was a tiny, barely profitable, blacksmith shop, he had some hired help. The Communists made Chaim get rid of the hired workers, and he became a full-time 'worker' himself, rather than a despised 'business-owner'. His already-meager income was reduced. However, Marcia was now allowed to join the Communist youth organization 'The Pioneers'. The Pioneers provided a social life full of outings, meetings, parties, and sports. Marcia did well in the Russian schools, except for mathematics, her worst subject. Ida tells stories of how she helped Marcia with her Hebrew; Marcia would start to cry in frustration, and then Ida would start to cry in sympathy.

Marcia's life was more severely disrupted when the Germans attacked Russia's territories in June 1941. Within one week, the Russians had disappeared and the hated and feared Germans were everywhere. Soon two of Marcia's relatives from Ivye arrived in Mishukovitz, fleeing the Nazi mass killings that had already started there. Miriam and Eli Golinkin were both highly educated schoolteachers, and were heading for Russia. They stopped in Mishukovitz to warn their cousins to flee also. They urged and begged Chaim to take his family and whatever he could carry and run to Russia. Chaim did not believe their fantastic stories of mass killings, and said: "I am only a worker, the Germans won't bother with me." Many people shared Chaim's view, and remembered that the Germans had been decent to Jews in World War 1. Naïve and stubborn Chaim could not be convinced to leave.

But Miriam and Eli knew that they did not exaggerate anything. They hired a Gentile neighbor from Mishukovitz, a man named Yan Bercuk, who helped smuggle several Kozlowski family members during the Russian and German occupations. Yan had no special sympathy for Jews, but he was reliable, and was willing to take a risk for the payments he received. Miriam and Eli gave Yan some clothes as payment, and Yan took them to the Russian border in his horse-drawn wagon. Miriam and Eli got into Russia, where they had a difficult time. Eventually Eli died there, of starvation. Miriam made it to Israel, settled in Herzlia, and lived alone until she died, at an old age. Yan's brother eventually lived in New York, and sometimes visited the Kozlowski family.

From June to early September 1941, all remained quiet in Mishukovitz. Everyone was scared though, even the Gentiles, because the rumors were frightening. In September, the Germans arrived, and the first sight of them was grim. Marcia's 15



year-old cousin, Zalman Lipchin, had come to spend the summer vacation with his cousins, and now he was walking with his hands raised over his head, with 2 Nazis poking rifles into his back. Leah came out of their house and almost fainted when she saw her nephew at the point of a gun. She started to cry, begging the Germans to let Zalman go. What could this innocent 15-year-old boy have done? They freed Zalman, but within the year, the Nazis had killed Zalman and his entire family.

In September, all the Jews in the villages were forced into the larger towns to concentrate the Jews into fewer, larger areas. Marcia's family was sent to Ivye, and moved in with Leib Kozlowski, Chaim's half-brother. Ten families were soon forced to live in this small house, as several thousand Jews were crowded into two streets. Every Jew had to work for the Germans. Marcia and other young girls were herded into wagons and taken to work in the fields from early morning until dark. Marcia sometimes smuggled a few potatoes home under her clothing, as food was already scarce. Marcia and other young children were also forced to do useless and degrading labor. Marcia remembers being forced to stoop in the street to pick weeds from between the cobblestones. The other thing that Marcia remembers is how scared everyone was, every day. Sometime during this time, the people of Mishukovitz asked that Chaim return to their village, as they needed a blacksmith. The family moved back, and during this time, the Nazis carried out their first mass killing in Ivye. One day, Tzirele Bernstein's uncle (Karen Segal's grandfather's brother) came to the village and told everyone that the Germans had massacred 225 Jewish men in Ivye. The Kozlowski family was luckily spared. Within several months, though, all Jews were moved back to the larger towns, an ominous sign.

The Germans barged in at all hours to 'inspect' homes, although these inspections were just an excuse to terrorize, beat, or kill. During one inspection, Marcia's 17-year-old brother Joe was badly beaten because he kept his hands in his pockets. Marcia's father was nearly killed when some Nazis caught him walking with his prayer books, accusing him of praying that the Germans would lose the war. They burned his *talit*, *tefilin*, and *siddur*, and beat him on the head with their rifle butts until his face was bleeding and unrecognizable. This happened as he was near his home, and Leah heard the commotion in the street and ran out to beg the Nazis to spare Chaim. She literally kissed their filthy boots to plead for Chaim's life. Another time, the Nazis gathered hundreds of Jewish men to pull a huge Russian tank into town. The tank was disabled, and so the men were harnessed to the tank like animals, with ropes and chains. Nazis sat on the tank every day for over a week, and used whips with metal spurs on the tips to beat the men. Chaim's bald head was cut and torn to shreds. Things continued like this through the winter.

By May 1942, there were rumors that the Nazis were preparing for a larger mass killing. Jews started to hide in whatever secret places they could find. By now many houses, both Jewish and Gentile, had built '*malinas*', small hiding places between walls or under floors. The Nazis soon surrounded the two Jewish streets, and announced that no one could leave their homes for any reason. Marcia remembers the first casualty. A little 13-year-old girl left her home to go to the outhouse, and was immediately shot. This girl's mother sadly said: "Maybe my daughter was a sacrifice, and now no one else will be killed." No one was yet ready to believe that the Nazis were out to kill all the Jews on the entire planet.



The Germans knew that many people were in hiding, and so announced that because of the Judenrat's cooperation, the ghetto would be spared. Most of the hiding Jews came out, apparently believing that the threat was over. On May 12, 1942, the Nazis again surrounded the Jewish area, and at 5:00 a.m. began banging and breaking down all Jewish doors. Marcia remembers the harsh repetitive command "*Rouse! Rouse! Rouse!*"; "Out! Out! Out!" All the Jews of Iyve were pushed into the market place area before dawn, and told to kneel in the dirt. Jews who tried to hide were shot. Even infants left in their cribs were killed. Jews of all ages were forced to stay in the marketplace for hours, while the Germans and their helpers started the 'selection'. There was no food, water, or toilet leave. If someone had to urinate or defecate, they had to do it in public, where they were kneeling. Soon the people in the marketplace started hearing distant gunshots. Some people said they were able to hear people's cries and prayers as the wind carried the sounds. The entire Kozlowski family thought they would die that day.

Ten families at a time were taken for 'selection'. Families that did not possess 'useful Jews' were told to go straight ahead. Families with members who could be of value were told to go left or right. As Marcia later found out, going straight meant straight to death. Families that possessed no people young and strong enough for manual labor were of no value. Families with young infants, or too many women, were of no value. Teachers, storekeepers, musicians, accountants were of no value unless they looked physically strong. Doctors, nurses, blacksmiths, mechanics, woodworkers, lumber mill hands, or young men were of value to the Germans. Immediately in front of Marcia's family were their relatives: Leib and Shayna Kozlowski, their two sons Shlomo and Chaim, Chaim's wife Batia, along with their two children Heshe and Shaul; Marcia's aunt Rifka Baksht, and her husband Nochim and three young children, Joseph, Yehudit, and Shmuel. They were all sent straight ahead, whipped and clubbed as they walked, and were never seen again. The entire families, children and adults, were annihilated that day.

Marcia and her family were taken to the selection area. They were questioned for what seemed like hours. Ida was a nurse, and she wisely wore her Red Cross armband. Chaim was a blacksmith, and Joe was a healthy teenage boy. Marcia's family had enough people 'of value' to the Germans, and the entire family was told to go to the left. They had survived the infamous Iyve Mass Slaughter of May 12, 1942, in which nearly 2,500 Jews were killed in one day. The victims were taken to nearby Stonevitsch, where drunken Lithuanian goons shot them. The dead and barely dead were then thrown into huge pits dug by their fellow Jews.

Some Jews were able to escape on the way to their graves. A family friend named Minya Angiel and her 4-year-old daughter Riva (now Friedman) ducked from the line of victims, and ran into an outhouse. They hid in the pool of excrement and urine until dark, and then made their way to the home of a Gentile friend, where they stayed hidden for some time. They both survived the war. Morris Albertstein's family survived the selection, but most were later killed anyway.

The only other member of Morris' family to survive was his sister Leah. Almost all of Marcia's classmates and friends were killed in this mass killing: Gitel, Minya, Rachel, others. The only classmate to survive was a boy named Alan Small, who



eventually made his way to the partisans. He now lives in New Jersey and Florida, and still goes to the Ivye Society meetings, as does Marcia and many other family members.

That evening, the sadistic Nazi commander, Leopold Vindish, addressed the surviving Jews. He told them they were the lucky ones: "You have survived—for the time being." The survivors were told to give up all the money and valuables they had, or be shot. The survivors were then forced into the Ivye ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire, with a single guarded gate. Marcia's family and several other families moved into an empty home—the home of a family that had not survived. Other families sharing this house included Marcia's uncle Yitzhak Kozlowski and his family, including 5 children; the Gumnitz family, including parents, grandparents, and 4 children; and 2 more families from the small village of Lipinshok. Five families and over 30 people now lived in this house.

The Germans soon established the Ivye Judenrat, the Jewish council. This council enforced German edicts, and many Jews considered the Judenrat as despicable as the Nazis. The council decided who would go on the work gangs, made Jewish women cut their hair short, made them turn in their valuables, even collected fur collars. Some members of the Ivye Judenrat had an argument with Morris Albert (Albertstein back then), asking him for money that he did not have, and beat him nearly to death. The Judenrat did not tolerate any escape plans, fearing that they themselves would be punished or killed for not controlling escapes.

As before, all Jews had to work. Marcia was forced to clean the streets and to tend vegetable gardens outside the ghetto. Joe was sent to a slave labor camp in Lida, where he almost died. Chaim was sent to do blacksmithing work outside the ghetto. Jews in the ghetto started to build 'malinas' where they could hide temporarily. Morris Albert's uncle had lived in a house near the edge of the ghetto, and he built a hiding place where Marcia and Ida hid during their later escape.

Soon Ida started to receive letters from her friend Rubin Segalowicz, who was by now with the partisans. In his last letter, he told Ida that the partisans had found out that the Nazis would liquidate the Ivye ghetto by January, and that Ida's family should escape immediately. Leah and Gloria got out with Chaim during his work outside the ghetto, and Gloria was sent to hide with their kind neighbors, Sasha and her sister-in-law Suzanna. Ida did not discuss Rubin's escape plans with Marcia, knowing that a misplaced word could result in disaster. However, Marcia was aware of what was going on, and she knew that she would follow Ida wherever she went.

Ida, Marcia and several friends decided to escape from the ghetto on the next snowy winter night, hoping the snow would aid their escape. On a stormy night in December 1942, they decided to take the chance. Marcia took some fabric she found and stuck it into her blouse, thinking that maybe she could trade it for food later on. This was the only 'valuable' that she could think of, and even Ida did not know that she did this. Marcia and the others sat awake until midnight. Marcia remembers being cold and scared to death, thinking that they would all surely be killed that night. At midnight, they covered themselves with white bed sheets to better blend into the snow. They crept to the house of Morris Albert's uncle near the



ghetto edge. From here, they crept to the barbed wire and squeezed under it, avoiding the moving searchlights the entire time. They crawled and walked the several miles through snow and freezing water to their home village of Mishukovitz. The entire distance was less than 6 miles, but it took them the entire night.

Rubin's comrades arranged to hide them for 2 or 3 days in Sasha's house, along with their sister Gloria. Then they went to a series of other safe houses in the woods around Mishukovitz. They sought out Gentiles whom they knew for food and one-night's hiding, and some were sympathetic. Others were not, or were afraid to help Jews. Finally, Marcia joined up with her parents in a hidden hut in the forest. Rubin then took Ida and her friend Frooma Tamfel to join the partisans. Marcia and Gloria were too young to be taken in by any partisan unit, and Marcia's parents were too old, even though they were only in their 40's. During these terrible days and nights, Marcia remembers the cold, the hunger, and the fear that they would all be killed.

Marcia and the others could not stay too close to Mishukovitz because of the danger of being found out or turned in. Before long, Joe Starkman arrived at their hideout in a horse-drawn sled to take Marcia, her parents, Frooma Tamfel and her mother Henne and sister Eshke, and friend Henne Berkowitz, to a place deeper in the woods. Rubin had built two underground bunkers; a main bunker, and a smaller emergency dugout nearby. The main bunker was built mostly underground; the entrance was through a concealed sunken hole next to a large tree. After going down a small ladder, the wooden entry door was further camouflaged with branches. Inside, a raised wooden platform served as a bed for all seven people. Everyone slept in their 'spot' on this platform, lined up like immovable logs. Marcia's spot was unfortunately beneath a hole through which water dripped whenever it rained. There was a small stove made from a metal barrel, with a small vent pipe. They had one cooking pot, but few other supplies; no blankets, spoons, dishes, soap, or warm clothing.

There was little food, and Marcia and the others were hungry for days on end. Some considerate partisans occasionally brought whatever food they could. One savior was Peter Chodosz, a family friend and Chaya Chodosz's future husband. He occasionally brought potatoes, which were often eaten frozen. One day Peter brought a dead calf, which the seven people cooked and ate in almost one sitting. In desperation, Marcia's father went out one day to find, steal, or beg for food. Some Russian partisans found him, and accused him of spying for the Germans, threatening to kill him. The Russians knew that this desperate and starving Jew was no Nazi spy. They brought Chaim to a nearby house, where the occupant recognized him as the Mishukovitz blacksmith, and convinced the partisans not to harm Chaim. However, the Russians told Marcia's father to go to Mikalaiveh and report to them on how many Germans were there. They were probably just torturing and playing with Chaim, and eventually let him go.

One lasting memory Marcia has of her little sister Gloria's life in this bunker still brings tears to her eyes. Marcia had made a hat for 11-year old Gloria, knotting short strands of wool together to make them longer. One sunny day Gloria poked herself halfway through the bunker opening to get some sun. Lice were constant pests, and Gloria took off the hat that Marcia had made, and started to pick the vermin out of her hat and hair. The biggest bugs were living in the numerous knots,



and Gloria pulled out some lice “as big as her fingers”. Little Gloria did not say anything, just stood there in the sunlight, picking lice from her hair and clothes. Marcia quietly watched her, and still remembers this sad scene, which brings tears to her eyes.

Other than picking lice, survival occupied their waking hours. Fright, cold, filth, vermin, and hunger were with them constantly. The small stove was used mostly at night, so its smoke would be less visible. When they burned wet wood, the stove smoked dreadfully and filled the bunker with choking, eye-burning fumes. Marcia and the others covered their faces with scarves, and ventured out of the bunker one at a time during dark nights, staying out only long enough to catch their breath.

When Marcia turned 15, she was able to join the ‘Kalinin partisan *otriad*’ with Rubin and Ida. Marcia’s parents and Gloria went to a new hiding place in the woods along with the wife of Dr. Melamed, Ida’s co-worker. Brother Joe was in a slave labor camp in Lida, along with other friends and relatives. Marcia remained with Rubin and Ida in the partisans through 1944. Marcia performed kitchen chores such as peeling potatoes and preparing meals. Towards the last few weeks, the entire Kozlowski family was united for the first time in years when they were allowed to join the all-Jewish Bielski *otriad*. The Russians soon liberated the Belarus region, and the Nazis were on the run. The entire Bielski *otriad* marched triumphantly out of the woods to the Russian base at Novogrudek, forming a mile-long parade of over 1,200 people. The most memorable part of this march for Marcia was the ability to finally leave the dreaded forest and bunker. Everyone looked forward to whatever normal life they could salvage.

On the last day before liberation, nearly a dozen Jewish partisans were killed in fighting the by-now desperate Germans. One more day, and these men would have lived. During that battle, the partisans also captured three Germans. The non-fighting Jews in Bielski’s unit, the old, and the young, surrounded the Germans, and took their revenge. One 8-year old orphaned boy, Benjamin Malachovsky, grabbed a wooden stick and thrashed the Nazis, calling out the names of his family members who were killed: his mother, father, brothers and sisters. After he couldn’t raise his arms any more, the rest of the camp, old men and women, beat the Germans to death with their bare hands. Marcia remembers that, for her personally, it “felt good to finally see the Germans get back what they did to others”.

After liberation, Chaim decided to move to Ivye, planning to re-start his blacksmith business and go back to his previous life. Their home in Mishukovitz was still intact, but nobody wanted to live in that forlorn village. Marcia and her family returned to the house that her father and uncle owned in Ivye. A Gentile family had moved in, and Rubin gave them several minutes to leave. However, conditions for Jews were deteriorating. The Communists were taking over Eastern Europe, and Stalin was turning fanatically anti-Semitic. Rubin and Ida were warned several times about the ominous future for Jews, and made plans to leave Europe for their life-long dream of Israel. Marcia and her brother Joe planned to join them. Marcia’s cautious parents reluctantly joined the rest of their family, and they all started their trek across Europe.

In November 1945, Marcia married Morris Albertstein in a displaced person camp in



Braunau Austria, the birthplace of Adolf Hitler. A few friends and relatives attended this wedding, but most of Morris's family was already dead. David Baksht's sister Batia even wrote out a *ketubah* (Jewish marriage contract). There was no band or music, but the gathering formed a circle and joyously danced the *hora* anyway.

Morris Albert's only living sister, Leah Menaker, was already in Milano, Italy. Marcia and Morris decided to join her there, and got on a train in Innsbruck. They were soon thrown off, as they had no tickets, and so walked and hitchhiked the rest of the way to Milano. From Milano, Marcia and Morris went through dozens of small cities, eventually arriving at Santa Maria d'Loca (Hills of Italy). From there, they traveled to Rome, where their other relatives later arrived by different routes. Marcia's family was now together again, staying in the various DP camps and transit camps.

Along with so many others, Marcia and Morris had their hearts set on going to Israel. Marcia remembers that they gathered their belongings and sent them to their relatives in Israel, so they would have clothes when they arrived. Marcia never got these things, but no harm was really done as their clothes amounted to nothing but *schmates* (rags) anyway. Legal immigration to Israel was nearly impossible because of the British blockade, so the underground *Bricha* had to smuggle Jews in. But this was not easy, and Marcia and Morris kept on continuously being told to go to departure points for the blockade-running ships, and then were disappointed as plans changed. During these many trips and waiting periods, there was never enough food, and Marcia and the others were continuously hungry.

Marcia and Morris's lives were going nowhere. Almost all of Morris's family in Europe had been killed, but Morris had some relatives in America. Morris's aunt and uncle, Rose and Rubin Cherry, sponsored their emigration to the U.S. In an attempt to leave the DP camps sooner, Marcia and Morris were told by friends to change their ages. Young people became older, and old people became younger, for no logical reason. On the official visa papers, Marcia became 2 years older, and Morris became 2 years younger. Morris and Marcia sailed out of Napoli on the ship *Saturnia*, arriving in New York on October 4, 1947. Morris' uncle arrived at the pier in a taxi, and took his young relatives to his apartment at 2224 Mermaid Avenue, in Brooklyn's Coney Island section. Uncle Cherry and aunt Bessie were poor people, but very nice to their refugee relatives, whom they had never seen before. Marcia remembers that they were made to feel at home immediately.

Morris soon called on his only other relatives in America, his aunt and uncle Rose and Izzie Stein, also formerly Alberstein. Izzie and Rose were very wealthy, and took Marcia and Morris to their fancy home in Newark NJ in a red Cadillac. Izzie and Rose were "on a diet", and did not think to have their maid offer Marcia and Morris any food during their visit. Rose decided that Marcia could be taught to be a maid. Izzie, who had been a butcher, thought that Morris should be a farmer. He shipped Marcia and Morris to a farm near Lakewood NJ, and arranged some wages for them. However, Marcia feels that he was not sympathetic, and was trying to take advantage of them or just lose them. Altogether, Marcia does not have good memories of Izzie and Rose. Many years later, some of Izzie's children from California contacted Marcia, trying to locate their relatives and "find their roots".



Later on, distant relatives Joe and Rachel Polanski, got Marcia and Morris work in the Nevele Hotel, a top Catskills resort. Marcia became a chambermaid, and Morris was a busboy. Neither of them spoke English, but all that the hotel cared about was experience for these 'highly skilled' occupations. Finally, aunt Rose Stein's maid training came in useful. The wages were \$60 a month each (plus tips), since 'room and board' was deducted from gross pay. Marcia and Morris had the choice of either sleeping separately with the other single people in their barely habitable accommodations, or staying together in a shack. They chose the cobweb filled shack, which was unheated, and had neither sink nor toilet. Marcia also got her brother Joe a job in this hotel, as a baker's assistant. In the Nevele, they met a Jewish cook, who offered to get them better jobs in the Paramount Hotel in nearby Fallsburg. Those jobs never materialized, and the dead-end, seasonal hotel jobs were poor paying. Marcia began to work in Manhattan, first in a leather novelty store, and then in a tie factory. Her wages were around 75 cents an hour. There were some other jobs in between, and life was very hard.

Morris's uncle Izzie had been a butcher, and Morris somehow decided to learn that profession. He worked for some time without pay, the customary means of entry into the trade. After nearly 3 years, Morris bought a meat store with a partner on busy Avenue M in Brooklyn's Midwood section. "M & M Kosher Meats" became a successful business, but Morris worked very hard. Morris would get up before 1:00 a.m. to go to the wholesale meat market. He would bring the meat to his store and cut it up before dawn so it would be ready for the store opening. Marcia and Morris lived in several apartments and homes in that area for many years.

Marcia and Morris had three children. Kenneth Saul was named after Morris's father, and was born on May 12, 1955. He was a beautiful and energetic boy, with curly blonde hair, blue eyes, and rosy cheeks. He unfortunately died of acute leukemia on January 3, 1963, a devastating loss to Marcia and Morris and the entire family. Linda Ann was born on April 18, 1963, and is named after Marcia's father and Morris's sister. Linda has two children, Lauren born August 16, 1986 and Michael, born May 15, 1988. Howard Allen was born on Dec. 3, 1965, and named after Marcia's father Chaim. Howard has one daughter Erica, born Dec. 22, 1995. Morris suffered from Alzheimer's disease for many years before his death, during which Marcia tended to him with endless devotion.

Marcia had a hard life during the war years, when most teenagers might expect to have a carefree life. Marcia's life has rarely been carefree. After the war, expectations of a better life were upset by undeserved tragedy and loss.



## **Joe Kazlow**

*Joseph Kozlowski was forced to work in Nazi slave labor camps while still a teenager, where he almost died. He eventually escaped to join the partisans.*

Joseph Kozlowski was born in 1924 in Mishukovitz, a tiny village (*dorf*) in Byelorussia, very close to the Lithuanian border. Joe never knew his exact birth date, as such dates were not important milestones, and chose May 1. Joe's parents Chaim and Chana Leah (Lipchin) Kozlowski worked very hard just to meet their family's basic needs. Chaim and Leah's marriage was 'arranged', as Leah's father liked the hard-working, religious Chaim. Joe's siblings were Chaya (Ida), Mooshe (Marcia), and young Gisheh (Gloria).

Mishukovitz was an isolated, peaceful, poor village set near the vast surrounding forests. Mishukovitz was so small that there were no schools, *schuls*, or stores in the village. The well-known *shtetl* of Ivye, 6 miles away, had all these institutions, as well as the all-important marketplace. There were no more than 50 families in Mishukovitz, and the Kozlowski family was the only Jewish family. The children and Leah did not like this situation, but they did not complain about something they could not change. Chaim's family was from this region, and he eked out a living as the only blacksmith in the village. Leah's life was filled taking care of her family, and she worked very hard at her daily chores in the house, barn, and yard. She also earned some money as a seamstress, using her treadle-powered Singer sewing machine. There was no electricity in Mishukovitz until after the war, even if they could have afforded an electric sewing machine. Joe only had Jewish friends when he went to school, away from home. In his home village, Joe had several Gentile friends, and they all got along most of the time. Occasionally, they would call Joe "Jew boy", but this was the only manifestation of anti-Semitism that young Joe saw.

Among Joe's first memories was going to school in Karelich, 45 miles from Mishukovitz. Joe and his older sister Ida went to school here for several years, going to Hebrew studies after public school. In Karelich, they stayed with their grandparents, Aaron Lipchin and his second wife Bella. Aaron was a shoemaker, and he was a strict and religious man. The Lipchin home was very large, but by the time Joe's younger sister Marcia came to take her turn at their house, it had burnt down. Fires were common in the towns, which had many closely spaced wooden homes. Few relatives had enough room for more than one boarder, and were mostly too poor to feed even one additional mouth. Therefore, when Joe arrived in Karelich Ida left and went on to school in Ivye, living with their aunt Rivka Baksht. Joe remained alone in Karelich, going home to Mishukovitz only for the summer and the Pesach holiday. There was a horse trade between towns, and Joe would pay six or seven *zlotys* (a few cents, but a significant sum then) for the ride home on the wagon to which the horses were tied. If the roads became muddy during the spring rains, Joe would have to stay home for several weeks, falling behind in his studies.

The Kozlowski family was no doubt poor by most standards, but the children did not feel deprived, especially when compared with less fortunate people in that poor region. There was always sufficient food to eat, with their own milk, chickens, eggs, and vegetables. Birthdays were not celebrated, although Shabbat and Jewish holidays were. During summer vacations, Joe would work in his father's blacksmith



shop, and probably would have gone into this trade if he stayed in Eastern Europe, as was the custom. Blacksmithing was the family trade, and Chaim's father and all but one of his brothers were blacksmiths (*tante* Jennie's 'uncle Dave' was a tailor). However, Joe did not plan to stay in Europe, as *Eretz Yisroel*, עֵרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, was rapidly becoming the dream of many Jewish youngsters in this region.

Joe was Bar Mitzvahed in the nearby *dorf* of Mikalaiveh, which had enough Jewish families for a *minyan* and a small *schul*. Bar Mitzvahs were modest and routine affairs, and Joe simply went to *schul*, said the prayers, and afterwards his parents served cake and wine. After his Bar Mitzvah, Joe went to the Yeshiva in Ivye, living with his aunt Rivka Baksht, as Ida had done before him. He also ate his meals at other people's homes. This was the custom of charitable "eating days", for Yeshiva students living away from home. Joe hated this, because the Yeshiva studies were very hard, and he did not like living far from his family and eating at strange people's homes. The food was generally good, although Joe remained thin. The best meals were at his first cousin's home, Chaim and Batia Kozlowski, (Chaim was Leib and Shayna's son) where he ate his Shabbos meals. After about one half year of this, Joe decided to stop going to the Yeshiva. Although Chaim and Leah valued education as much as any Jewish family, times were hard, and they allowed Joe to stop his schooling so he could work with his father. Sometimes Joe accompanied Chaim to the market in Ivye, where Chaim sold the wrought iron goods he made in his shop: axes, scythes, cutlery, wagon wheel rims, and sleigh runners in winter.

In 1939, the Russians invaded Eastern Poland, Belarus, and the surrounding areas, while Germany invaded Western Poland. Poland quickly capitulated to the powerful invaders. Joe was then 15, and was working with his father and one or two other workers in the small blacksmith shop. The Communists immediately put a stop to all "exploitation of workers", and Chaim had to let his workers go so he could claim to be 'self-employed'. The alternative was internment in Siberia. Chaim now earned less money, and had to donate a portion of his earnings to the "collective". Joe went to school at night to learn the Russian language and history.

While going to school in Karelich, Joe had joined the Zionist Youth Organization Betar, and proudly wore the Betar uniform, brown shirts with blue trim. There were numerous Zionist groups affiliated with other political philosophies, but this group was the most right-wing group, believing that all means, including militancy, should be used to regain the Jewish homeland. Joe's group wore a black tie to mark the 1920 death of Joseph Trumpeldor, who died heroically during the defense of the Tel Hai settlement in *Eretz Yisroel*. The one-armed Trumpeldor was the first military hero of the Zionist revival, and 'Tel Hai' was the Betar greeting. The rival leftist socialist-leaning young Zionists called the Betar members 'Nazis' because of their black ties, brown shirts, and defiant militaristic stance. The Russians considered Zionism an enemy of Communism, and they put an end to all public Zionist activities, including Betar. The Russians also banned the use of Hebrew, but reluctantly allowed Yiddish to be used, as it was just considered another native or ethnic language and not Zionist.

The Russian occupation was otherwise non-eventful, and the area remained peaceful until the Germans invaded this region in June 1941. Tiny Mishukovitz itself was not bombed, as there were no industries, highways, or railroads there.



However, the citizens of Mishukovitz heard the cannon, gunfire, and explosions, and saw the German bombers flying overhead. Soon Jews were inundating the nearby roads, fleeing East towards Russia and away from the Germans, traveling by foot, on horseback, and by wagon. A handful of German soldiers were soon stationed in Mishukovitz, but for the first few days, all remained calm. No one in the village knew what was about to happen. People had heard stories about the brutal treatment of Germany's Jews and what the Germans did in occupied Western Poland, but most people did not believe these stories—they were too fantastic.

One day some Nazis barged into the blacksmith shop and asked Chaim if he was Jewish. They then searched the entire shop, throwing and turning everything upside down. Among the tools, iron castings, and forgings, they found a long, sharp piece of metal. They accused Chaim of making or hiding a bayonet, and started chasing him. As in many other unexplained instances, on this occasion no harm came to Joe's father, and no one knows whether the Nazis were just having some fun at Chaim's expense. However, the situation soon became much more terrifying.

The Nazis soon began resettling all the Jews from the small villages into the larger towns to efficiently manage their "Jewish problem". The Kozlowski family was sent to Ivye, forced into a small section of town with all the other Jews. In Ivye, the family stayed with Chaim's brother and his wife, Leib and Chaya Kozlowski. Only Ida was not here, as she was at nursing school in Slonim. In Ivye, Joe and Chaim again worked as blacksmiths, in Leib's shop, not knowing how long this situation would last. A few months later, the local citizens of Mishukovitz asked the Germans to allow Chaim to return home, since they needed their only blacksmith back. The family returned home, and Ida managed to return from Slonim, which had been bombed by the Germans. Jews were not allowed to travel, so Ida came home hidden in a wagon of a Gentile who was paid to smuggle her home.

During this time, some of the *goyim* started to rob and torment Jews in the areas around Ivye, encouraged by the Nazis. These rampages accomplished persecution and killing of Jews, rewarded the locals with the goods they stole, and made the locals into accomplices in the Nazi's crimes. One clear Sunday, shortly after some such pogrom, the sky darkened rapidly and a thunderstorm erupted. A bolt of lightning destroyed the home of one of the leaders of the *goyim*. The superstitious peasants viewed this as punishment for their misdeeds, and stopped their *pogroms*.

Soon the first large-scale killing occurred in Ivye. On August 3, 1941, the holiday of Tisha B'Av, the *Einsatzgruppen* killing squads and their non-German goons killed 225 Jewish men of Ivye for no reason. The fact that the Kozlowski family was sent back to Mishukovitz may have saved their lives. By April 1942, all Jews were again forced back to Ivye, including the Kozlowski family. Within one month, everyone knew that something ominous was about to happen, and many Jews went into hiding. To lure out the hidden Jews, the Nazis announced that they were canceling their prior plans, saying that they were happy with the cooperation of the Jewish council, the *Judenrat*. Many naïve Jews came out of their hiding places. Joe remembers one of his relatives, his aunt Shayna, knowing that this was a trap, saying: "If the Nazis took the time to make a bed, they will sleep in it."



In early May the Nazis started increasing their daily harassment of Jews beyond what was already 'customary'. This culminated on May 12<sup>th</sup> 1942, when the *Einsatzgruppen* carried out the "Great Slaughter" of Iyve. The Nazis forced all Jews out of their homes in the early morning, and killed anyone they found hiding or left in the homes, even infants. The terrified victims were forced into the town square area. From there, they were herded to adjacent Barodina (or Barnardiner) Street, a wide street used as a parade ground. Here they were lined up in front of the Nazis and their helpers: Polish, Lithuanian and Byelorussian 'police'. These goons were armed with rifles, machine guns, and whips, and helped the Nazis with their 'selection', deciding who would live and who would die.

Teenagers, young adults, and people that were useful for slave labor or other purposes were sent either right or left. Families with older, weaker people, sick people, young children, and infants were sent straight ahead, in the direction of the Catholic Church. They were herded 2 miles to the village of Stonevitsch, where fellow Jews had previously been forced to dig huge pits. They were then forced to undress and hand over whatever valuables they might have with them. Finally, drunken Lithuanian 'police', who seemed to revel in their assignment, shot them mercilessly. The victims fell into the graves; some were barely wounded, but smothered to death under the bodies dumped above them. This was the most tragic day in the history of Iyve's Jews, from which they would never recover. On that single day, 2,482 of Iyve's Jews were butchered for no reason.

The entire Kozlowski family heard the distant shootings as they knelt on the ground, trembling as they waited for their turn to be killed. They survived that slaughter because Ida was a nurse, and Joe and his father were blacksmiths, 'useful Jews' as the Nazis called them. That afternoon the survivors were forced to move into the newly formed Iyve ghetto, behind the market square. This small area was enclosed with barbed wire, with one guarded entry gate. The Kozlowski family moved into a house with four other families. Everyone old enough to walk now had to wear the Star of David patch on his or her clothing. Joe was of course very upset about this, knowing that it marked him for persecution, or worse.

Blacksmiths traveled outside of the ghetto to do their work, so Joe avoided some of the brutal ghetto atrocities. Occasionally, he was able to buy or trade for some food from the local farmers and peasants, in secret of course. Life in the ghetto was difficult for the Kozlowski family, and just getting enough food to eat was a challenge. The Nazis were systematically trying to starve Jews to death, specifically limiting the number of calories they were rationed. The meticulous Nazis classified death from starvation and disease as 'natural deaths'. Marcia was made to work in the fields and in the town, often doing menial and degrading work such as picking weeds from the streets. She was also sometimes able to sneak some potatoes back from the fields, scared to death that she would be caught. A Jew could be beaten or killed for having a potato hidden under a shirt!

Joe's father Chaim got the worse treatment, and was beaten and harassed countless times. Once he was beaten when some Nazis caught him walking home from a *shiva* visit. Two young Nazi thugs accosted him, accusing him of praying that the Nazis would lose the war. They burned Chaim's *talit*, *tefilin*, and *siddur*, and beat him endlessly with their rifles. Only Leah's crying and pleading saved him, and



she literally kissed the filthy boots of the Nazi thugs as she begged for Chaim's life. Chaim's face was unrecognizable, battered, black-and-blue, and bleeding.

Joe was young, smaller, and quicker than the older men, so he was able to slip between buildings and other objects, or hide to escape the worst treatments. However, he could not escape everything. One day, the Germans found a large abandoned Russian tank in the woods, which weighed over 100,000 pounds. It was miles out of town, and was damaged so it could not be driven or steered. The Nazis rounded up every Jewish man and teenage boy in Ivye, literally hundreds of people, lashed them to the tank with ropes and chains, and ordered them to pull it to town. The huge hulk was barely movable. They attached a large telegraph pole to the tank to serve as a rudder, and this pole had to be pushed manually from side-to-side also. Germans sat on top of the tank and endlessly beat their victims with whips. They even sadistically attached sharp metal shards to the whips to mutilate their victims more. Joe and his father were shackled to the tank, but Joe's father was taller, and bald. The Nazis targeted his hairless head, and whipped him so badly that his entire scalp was swollen, raw, covered with blood, and almost skinned. As for the tank, it took over a week for the tank to be pulled to where the Germans wanted it, and it was then left in the center of Ivye, serving no purpose.

That summer, Joe and 70 other young men from the Ivye ghetto were sent to a slave labor camp near Lida, 20 miles away. His cousin Joe Kozlowski, Yitzhak's son, was in this camp also. The men had to cut down the huge trees from the forests and load them manually onto wagons. This was dangerous work, as few of the boys or men knew how to fell trees. The slave laborers worked 14 hours a day, seven days a week, and many men died as the huge trees and branches fell wildly. Beatings, whippings, and death were common. Joe and the others planned to escape, to join the partisans before they were killed.

Lida was also the site of important railroad crossings, and soon the Germans needed to repair the railroad tracks that were being destroyed by Russian partisans. Blacksmiths and metal workers were needed, and any Jew who knew how to lift a hammer suddenly claimed to be a blacksmith to get away from the dangerous lumberjacking work. With Joe's experience, he easily became part of this work detail. The prisoners at the work site slept in two-level bunk beds in unheated, crowded, filthy railroad cars. There were no toilets or washrooms. The sadistic Germans beat and whipped their victims frequently, for no reason. The food was insufficient and miserable, and Joe and the other workers were always hungry. Soup was often just rotten vegetables in hot water, and the milk was always watered down. Bread was scarce. Sometimes Joe and the others obtained food scraps from a sympathetic cook if anything was left after the German guards ate. Most of these guards were ethnic Germans who lived in Poland, and a few of them were civilized, but most did not give out the surplus food, preferring to throw it away. Diseases were common and spread rapidly under the terrible conditions, and Joe came down with severe case of typhus in the cold 1943 winter. By January he was constantly throwing up any food he ate, had a high fever, became dehydrated, and was near death. Joe had to keep working though, because anyone too sick to work was killed, and anyone with a contagious disease was killed faster. For unknown reasons, someone sent Joe to a hospital in Lida. Joe does not know who sent him



or why, because other sick prisoners were not dealt with this kindly. Perhaps it was *beschert* (pre-ordained). Near the tenth day, a nurse told him that he was very lucky that he became sick and was sent to the hospital, as the Jewish laborers were all sent back to the Iyve ghetto, which was liquidated while he was in the hospital. Joe thought he was the sole survivor in his family; that his whole family had died.

However, Joe's family had not died. His future brother-in-law, Rubin Segalowicz, had already joined the partisans, and found out about the planned fate of the Iyve ghetto. His warnings and preparations allowed the Kozlowski family to escape. Ida and Marcia escaped just several days before the ghetto was liquidated, using white sheets to camouflage themselves during a snowy night. Young Gloria was taken out and hidden at the home of a Gentile friend in Mishukovitz, Sasha Minko. His father had also escaped while working outside of the ghetto to do his blacksmith work, taking Joe's mother with him. Literally minutes after Chaim and Leah left, the ghetto gates were shut, and no one else was allowed to leave for any reason. The killings started minutes after the gates closed. Ida soon joined the partisans with Rubin, where they were married. The rest of Joe's family, who could not be accepted into any partisan unit, moved to various hiding places in the forests.

From the hospital, Joe was sent to the Lida ghetto. By now, he knew that his family was amazingly alive, but he also knew what the fate of all the ghettos would be. During Pesach 1943, Joe escaped from the Lida ghetto along with about 20 friends, running into the dense forest. About 12 miles from Lida they met a group of Jewish partisans, but Joe and his friends did not have guns, and these partisans would not take in unarmed men, Jews or not. Joe and his friends kept on walking towards Mishukovitz, hoping to somehow join his family. In Mishukovitz, his neighbors told him that his family might be in a hidden bunker that Rubin Segalowicz had prepared near the *dorf* of Bereva, near Mikalaiveh. Joe found this place, and joined his parents, and his sisters Marcia and Gloria. By the end of the war, only two men of the group of 20 that had escaped from the Lida ghetto were still alive. One of them was Joe's close friend Moishe Kinkulkin, Philip Kinn's cousin.

Nineteen-year old Joe knew that he needed a weapon to join a partisan group. Joe Starkman, Rubin Segalowicz's brother-in-law, rode by on horseback one day and told Joe where to find a rifle. The rifle had belonged to an anti-Semitic and treacherous partisan by the name of Victor. Rubin and Joe had just killed Victor a few days earlier, to prevent Victor from killing them. Joe found the rifle, which Joe gave to his friend Moishe. The firing bolt was missing because Rubin had thrown it away. Joe went to a local villager he knew and traded the warm jacket he wore for a firing bolt. Moishe survived the war in Europe, went to Israel, and fought in its War of Independence. He was wounded during a battle, kept on fighting heroically, but died from his wounds.

Rubin arranged for Joe to be accepted into his Russian partisan *otriad*, and Joe soon found a weapon. Joe worked in the partisan camp kitchen, built underground '*ziemlankas*' (bunkers), guarded the partisan airstrip, and went out on raids and missions, sometimes accompanying the explosives group that Rubin was part of. While many Russian partisans accepted Jewish comrades, some of the Russians were antagonistic even to Jews in their own units. When a Jew joined their unit, they would welcome them with a statement such as "You gave your gold to the



Germans, and now you come to us.” Joe remembers one particularly offensive man who used to work for a Jewish family before the war. He would frequently make disparaging comments about Jews, making sure that his intended victim heard his insults. He made jokes about stupid people, always making the joke’s dupe Jewish. Later on, when Joe, Rubin, and the others were part of Bielski’s Jewish family-camp partisan unit, a group of Russian partisans came upon Joe and several other young Jewish partisans. The Russians made the Jewish partisans give up their rifles, not because they needed them, but because they felt like disarming the Jews.

As the danger to Joe’s parents and sisters who were hidden in the forests increased, Rubin obtained permission to leave the Russian partisan unit in order to re-unite the Kozlowski family in Bielski’s partisans. Joe and his entire family were now together for the first time in years. The several weeks spent in Bielski’s camp were relatively quiet, as the Nazis were starting to lose the war. The Bielski camp was by now a village of over 1,200 people, surrounded by the protective forests and partisan units. It had a hospital, bakery, even a *schul*. Joe is in a famous photo of a large group of Bielski’s partisans (look in the upper right hand side). As the Nazis fled, Joe and the rest of the family took part in the famous march of the entire Bielski camp to Novogrudek, in which the entire Jewish brigade came out of hiding to join up with the Russian army. The Russians staged a big celebration in Novogrudek in honor of the partisans, lasting an entire day.

There is a photo of Joe, Rubin, Ida, and Marcia in liberated Ivye, in which they appear to be wearing military uniforms. Actually, these were civilian clothes re-made from captured German garb, as the Jewish partisans never had any real uniforms. Joe weighed barely 135 pounds at a height of 5 feet 7 inches, but the thick clothes concealed his thin frame.

As the fighting in the region wound down, the Kozlowski family went to look for their relatives. Their home in Mishukovitz was undamaged, but nobody wanted to live in this forlorn village. In Ivye, a Gentile family had taken over the Kozlowski home, and they were made to leave immediately. The Kozlowski’s turned out to be the only Jewish family from the Ivye region who survived the war intact. All other families lost at least one member, and some were wiped out entirely. Most of Joe’s aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins died in the killings or ghetto liquidations.

It may seem surprising now, but Chaim planned to remain in Ivye, to re-start his blacksmith business. Chaim was not adventuresome, nor aware of the political situation. Life in Europe was all he knew. During this time, Rubin went on a mission to Moscow, where a Russian official advised him to leave the territories that the increasingly anti-Semitic Stalin controlled. Rubin’s commander in Ivye also warned him to get out of Europe, where Jews were still being persecuted even after the Nazi regime capitulated. Local Gentiles were not happy to see Jews returning, fearing they may have to return stolen Jewish property or account for their actions. Rubin, Ida, Joe, and Marcia all decided to leave Europe for Israel, leaving Joe’s apprehensive parents no choice but to join them. Through the *Aliyah Bet*, they left for Israel, traveling from Ivye through Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Austria, finally crossing the Alps and arriving in Italy in 1945. They covered over 2 thousand miles largely on foot, with danger the only certainty.



In the Italian displaced person (DP) camps, Joe joined a kibbutz in order to secure a place on a boat to Israel. He filled out the required forms, and for some unknown reason, stated a different age than his true age. Perhaps someone told him that a younger person could receive permission to leave sooner, or maybe it was better to be older. His sister Marcia and her husband Morris did the same thing. By now many Jews were convinced that telling the truth on these forms was not the best choice. Joe remembers a joke going around then, about a man who went to a Rabbi and asked advice as to whether he should give his newborn son one false name or another false name. The Rabbi asked "Why give him a false name, why not call him by his true name?" The man said: "I never thought of that."

Life in the DP camps was not easy. At one of the DP camps near Milano a group of leftist Zionist youths held a 'May Day' celebration. Some Germans who were kept in the same camp started to fight with them. There were constant fights between Jews, Germans, and the Italian police, and some Jews were killed in these brawls. By now, Joe had a nephew, Leibelle (Leon), and niece Reyzelle (Rosaline), Rubin and Ida's children. Joe remembers taking Leon to a cookie store in Italy. The British blockade and the interminable delays made it seem impossible to get to Israel. Joe found out that large numbers of Russians were being allowed into the U.S., while Polish war refugees had much stricter quotas. In any case, Joe eventually selected a new destination, the U.S., a temporary stop on the way to Israel. His cousin Joe was an orphan, subject to different regulations, and so was allowed to emigrate sooner, the first family member to leave Europe.

While in the DP camp in Italy, Joe received passage money and a gray pin-stripe man's suit from his uncle Dave in America. Uncle Dave, Chaim's half-brother, was the only Kozlowski male who was not a blacksmith. Joe had a tailor friend alter this suit so it would fit him for his voyage. He came over alone on a Polish ship, the Dansk-America Line's 'Sobiesk', arriving in New York on July 12, 1948. His uncle Dave and tante Jennie met him at the docks, recognizing the gray-pinstripe suit Joe was wearing. These very poor, wonderful people took Joe to their small apartment on Powell Street, where he met his three newly found cousins, Bernie, Freddie, and Heshie. During those few days, tante Jennie made Joe buy new shoes on Pitkin Avenue, as she did not like his Polish shoes. Joe remembers that he did not like the look or fit of the American shoes, but tante Jennie had her way. Joe also remembers visiting his cousin Bernie in the hospital, where he was being treated for a stomach ailment.

After several days Joe, speaking no English and with no money, took a bus to relatives in Ellenville, New York. His cousin Joe was already working as a waiter at the nearby Orchard House Hotel. Joe was supposed to work as a busboy here, but with his *mazel* (luck) no guests were showing up at the hotel, and he was not earning any money. His aunt's son, Sol Cohen, gave him \$10, and told him to not tell his mother that he gave him this money. Joe's sister Marcia was working as a chambermaid at the nearby upscale Nevele Hotel, where her husband Morris was also a busboy. Marcia found out that the Nevele was short a baker's assistant, and Joe got this much-needed job, at \$17 a week gross, less taxes and deductions for room and board. He stayed in the same 'room' as Marcia. Actually, it was a hothouse more than a room, and the temperature in the tiny cabin soared in the



summer heat. This was supposed to be a temporary job, and Joe looked forward to a job as a busboy, where he could earn more money. This job did not materialize, and Joe was soon on his way back to New York. Joe then went to an employment agency, and soon got a job in Union City, New Jersey as a baker. He also got an apartment near Uncle Dave, and commuted from Brownsville, New York to New Jersey. Joe then had other baking jobs, joined the union, worked summers as a baker in Pennsylvania, and then got a job as a head baker in a store in Little Neck Queens. When Ida and Rubin arrived in the U.S., Joe bought a coat for his niece Rosaline, and a leather bomber jacket and matching hat for his nephew Leon. The coat was so heavy that Leon sweated profusely in it even on the coldest days.

A short time later Joe's sister Gloria introduced him to her girlfriend, Dinah Magids. From this point on, Joe's journey from the *dorf* of Mishukovitz became less hectic. Joe dropped his plans of moving to Israel, although he retains his Zionist beliefs, and has visited Israel often. He is very active in his synagogue, Young Israel of Woodmere, where Joe and his wife Dinah have been honored for their charitable work. Joe's children Philip Gary and Gloria Debra are both married, and carry on their parent's deep Jewish traditions.

Gloria and Jerry Stulberger's children: Evan Daniel, born April 26, 1982; Mara Rachel, born March 15, 1984; Michelle Hope, born August 27, 1987; David Harvey, born Jan. 16, 1991. Philip and Leah Kazlow's children: Chani Rifka, born Dec. 31, 1990; Moshe born March 19, 1992; Esther, born March 17, 1993; David, born April 6, 1995; Chaim Zvi, born Jan. 24, 1998.

Joe lived through the war as a young man, and he never had the typical carefree life that a teenager and a young man might have in normal times. After Joe settled in America, he had a good life, a deservedly better life.



## **Dinah (Magids) Kazlow**

*Dinah and her family survived by hiding in the forests for several years, facing cold, hunger, and constant fear. This is based in part on a diary and recollections that Dinah kept for several years.*

### **The Early Years**

Dinah Magids was born in 1933 in a beautiful *shtetl* of about 2,000 people by the name of Varnjany, near the larger *shtetl* of Michalishauk (Michaliski). These towns are in Byelorussia, approximately 30 miles east of the famous Lithuanian city of Vilna, which at that time, was under Polish control. The *shtetl* had all kinds of people, rich and poor, young and old, Jews and Gentiles. There was the customary ancient Catholic Church, to which all the *goyim* used to come barefoot, carrying their one pair of good "Sunday shoes" on their shoulders to keep them clean. Most Jews associated mainly with their fellow Jews. Everyone got along well, but on Sundays young *schkatzim* from the surrounding villages would come into the *shtetl* and throw stones at the Jews and Jewish homes. Jewish homes always therefore had shutters on their windows, and Jews stayed indoors on Sundays. Jews were not allowed to fight back, and it would have been useless to complain to the police.

There was bus service to Vilna, a rarity in many towns. Grain fields and large forests surrounded the *shtetl*, and trees and flowers beautified the streets. Nice homes lined both sides of the main street; many of these homes were Jewish. Magnificent trees lined the main street from the church and surrounding estates to the town square, near which were many stores and the water well. The church was in the middle of the main street, surrounded by a post office, a courthouse, the *schul*, and the public school. Dinah's older sister Molly went to this school, and then got Hebrew lessons after school. One of the manors on the main street belonged to the *poretz*, the nobleman, who owned the large estates, possibly even the entire town. Everyone paid taxes to him, and he was called "The Major."

Dinah's family was considered reasonably wealthy, since their attractive home was located on the main street, close to the *schul*. Their house even had electricity. As was typical at that time in Eastern Europe, the home was occupied by several generations, with eight people living in it. The household consisted of Dinah, her parents Esther and Hirsh, *zeydee* Michael and *bubbee* Faje, *bubbee* Sarah, Dinah's brother Bob and her older sister Molly. The house had four bedrooms, and Dinah shared a room with Molly. Dina's father was in the timber business, buying and exporting lumber to Germany from the surrounding forests. Dinah's mother and *bubbee* had a fabric store, in which they spent most of their time. *Zeydee* Michael was a handsome man, with a full head of black hair, deep blue eyes, and a splendid beard. He spent most of his time in the *schul* studying Torah, which is what his wife wanted him to do. Having a *tzadikh* in the family was a great honor.

The Rabbi in the *shtetl* also had two other professions: he was a *shochet*, a ritual slaughterer, and he sold yeast. Dinah or Bob would often bring live chickens to the rabbi for slaughter. Every Friday morning Dinah's mother and her *bubbee* would rise early to bake and cook for the festive *Shabbat* dinner, and also prepared extra food for the *shtetl*'s poor people. Dinah and Molly would go to the Rabbi's house to buy yeast for the delicious *Shabbat* cakes and braided *challah*. Every Friday



evening the white tablecloth and the best silverware were put out, and *Zeyde's* silver wine cup was polished. The entire family put on their *Shabbos* clothes, and the *Shabbat* candles were lit. Before the meal, the children would go to *schul* with the men, while the women stayed home. Dinah still remembers the beautiful sight of Jews coming to the *schul* from all directions, dressed in their finery.

The other Jewish holidays were also similarly memorable. Dinah of course liked Chanukah, as all children do. Her *bubbee* would make little drawstring pouches of colorful fabric, in which the children would put their Chanukah *gelt*. The gift was often just a *groshen*, a small coin worth a portion of a Polish *zloty*, perhaps a penny. The children would spend their time counting the coins, which they used to buy candies. They could purchase six candies for five *groshen*, and would keep the candies for the entire week. Purim was also special, as Dinah's mother would buy chocolate candies and fancy confections in Vilna. The children would take the goodies in a plate covered with an embroidered kerchief to their friends and relatives, where they would trade these for other chocolates, cookies, and fruit.

The most exciting holiday was *Pesach*. Dinah's family would start to get ready for this holiday right after Purim. The whole *shtetl* was involved in making *matzohs*. Homes were re-painted, furniture was cleaned, floors were scrubbed, and the Passover dishes and tablecloths were brought out. The children used water and sand to clean and polish the cutlery, the Passover 'samovar', and 'Elijah's cup.' A special pillow for *zeydee* was also freshened, so he could lean during the *Seders*, as required in the *Hagadah*. By the first *Seder*, everything sparkled. These were glorious and memorable years, and this simple but happy life lasted until 1939.

### **The Nightmare Years: Hiding in the Forest**

Everything turned upside down in September 1939. The Magids children were not old enough to truly understand what was happening, as Molly was the oldest and only eleven years old. One morning, as Dinah's family was finishing breakfast, her father ran into the house. He looked frightened, saying that the Germans had invaded Poland in the west, Russia was invading from the East, and a big war was starting. Wars had come to this area before, and people knew what to do. Dinah went outside, and saw people running into the stores, and then coming out laden with as much food as they could carry. Dinah's parents did the same thing. In a few days, the Russians marched into Belarus from the East, without any real resistance.

Jews mostly welcomed the Russians, who were viewed as protectors against the Nazis. The Russians were actually pleasant, nicer than many of the Polish Gentiles. The Russians opened a new school and brought in an instructor to teach their language. Dinah finally started her schooling. However, the Russians forbade the practice of Judaism, and Jews had to observe their holidays in secret. The few rich Jews in the town who had owned businesses or factories were sent to Siberia, punished for their "capitalistic oppression." Dinah's father could not practice his trade anymore, as that would demonstrate that he was not a 'real worker'. He bought a horse and wagon, and worked at transporting people for a small fee. Life was disrupted, but it was still relatively tranquil, until the summer of 1941.



In June, Germany attacked their supposed ally with a huge surprise onslaught, and the Russian soldiers fled overnight. The Germans had not yet arrived in the *shtetl* when the Gentiles went on a *pogrom*. Dinah saw the *goyim* approaching Jewish homes with hatchets, metal bars, sticks, stones, and knives. Jewish homes were robbed and vandalized. What the bandits could not take they broke. Dinah's mother took her children and ran to the forest, but Dinah's father refused to flee. He said that he would not let these *goyishe* hoodlums destroy their home. The thugs forced their way into their house, and vandalized everything, breaking whatever they could not carry off. The thugs beat Dinah's father so hard he almost died, and several Jews in the *shtetl* were killed. The pogroms and robberies lasted several days, and then the Germans entered the town.

The first Germans who entered the town were actually pleasant, and seemed slightly older than the Germans who came next. Maybe they were real 'police' rather than soldiers. Dinah's mother did laundry and wash for them, and in return they gave her food and chocolate. This lasted about a week, and then the *Einsatzgruppen*, the 'killing squads', came in. These men were not soldiers. They were not trained to fight, only to kill unarmed Jews. In one of their first acts, the Nazi killers and their local helpers gathered the elite of the town—Rabbis, doctors, teachers, and other professionals, and told them they would be taken away to work. Nobody knew where the Nazis took these people, but none ever returned.

Jews were now forced to wear a yellow Star of David sewn onto their chest. One day several Nazis stopped a scholarly and pious man, "Chaim the *bord*" (wise or learned one). They started to pull the hair from his beard until he started to cry in pain. The Nazis laughed as he wept, and tormented him until he fainted. Several Nazis surrounded a pregnant Jewish woman, and punched her in the stomach until she collapsed. One Gentile who was caught helping a Jew was taken to the local sand quarry along with all the town's Jews, and he was executed in front of everybody. As Dinah walked through the streets of this once idyllic *shtetl*, the horrible sights she saw have lasted in her memory her entire life. Sometimes the memories return in her dreams, or rather nightmares. This was the beginning of Dinah's new life, an existence filled with constant hardships and fear.

The Nazis soon appointed the *Judenrat*, the Jewish council that carried out the German's orders. The *Judenrat* collected all the valuables the Jews possessed: gold, silver, clothing, and even metal utensils. The *Judenrat* selected slave labor work details every day; many days the men that left the ghetto did not return. Jewish men were made to build their own ghetto, two streets encircled with barbed wire into which all the Jews were forced. At least four families occupied each home where one had lived before; three other families moved into the Magids house. It was very crowded, but nobody complained. The only food distributed to the *ghetto* was a small amount of bread and watered down "skim" milk. The Nazis were obviously trying to starve Jews to death. One of the families had a beautiful young daughter. A Nazi came into the house one day and took her out by force, planning to rape her. Dinah's father started to fight with the Nazi, and during the scuffle, the girl ran away. The Nazi wanted to kill Dinah's father, but the entire family ran out and begged for mercy. For whatever reason, the Nazi let him go.



One Nazi officer kept a Jewish girl as a housemaid, and would frequently tell her that he was “going hunting”. It took her only a short while to figure out that whenever he said this, he would go to the ghetto to gather some people at random, and then take them to be shot in cold blood. Whenever he told her of his hunting plans, the girl would sneak out of the house and run to the ghetto to tell as many people as she could to hide. The only hope appeared to be escape from the ghetto.

Since Dinah’s father had been involved with lumber, the Nazis made him responsible for supervising the Jewish boys that were made to cut down trees for shipment to Germany. The family moved into a small village in the middle of the forest. Within a few days, Dinah’s parents and two other friends started to sneak out in the middle of the night, building a bunker in case they would be sent back to the doomed ghetto. They had no real digging tools, and the soil they scooped out had to be carried far away. The bunker was nearly 6 feet high inside, and camouflaged with a covering of replanted grass and brush. It took a long time to complete this haven, working only several hours each night when weather permitted. They stockpiled a small amount of food, clothing, and whatever else they could scrounge up, hopefully enough to last for two months. After that, they had no plans, only prayers and hope.

A few months later, all the Jewish workers were told they were to be sent back to the ghetto. By now, Dinah’s father was hearing many stories of mass killings, and knew they would be killed if they went back. One night, Dinah’s family and another family of four escaped to the bunker. Later, the other family moved into their own bunker, and Dinah’s father took in some single men who were also hiding in the forest. Within days, Dinah’s grandparents were murdered during the ghetto killings.

The months started to stretch into years. In the summers, they would venture outside in the dark of night to escape the oppressive heat. In the winter, everyone would huddle together to keep warm, as the bunker did not even have a stove. They were afraid to go outside anyway, because footsteps in the snow could have given them away to local peasants. On the occasions they ventured out, they had to carefully brush away their tracks. That first winter was very cold, but was actually more bearable than the spring, when the snow started to thaw. The melting snow saturated the bunker, and they would scoop the water up in small pots and carefully pour it outside during the middle of the night, working at this for hours. The children tried to keep dry by covering themselves with blankets.

Everyone slept on a sleeping platform that was raised a little off the damp floor. Beds were made of tree branches stacked together to form a ‘V’-shaped cradle. Small branches, leaves, and straw were stuffed into the crotch of the ‘V’ to soften the bed. Much of the time, everyone just lay in these beds. To go to the bathroom, the whole family used a single pot that Dinah’s parents would somehow empty during the night. That first winter, their entire diet was mostly dry bread and water. Dinah’s parents also managed to gather a few potatoes when they ventured out during the night to look for food or to make soup on a fire. The fire had to be some distance from the bunker in case they were caught. On one foray, her parents got lost in the woods, and the children thought they were killed. They came back after 4 o’clock that morning.



The children wept frequently, but they knew they could not cry aloud. For 'entertainment', Dinah's father would tell them stories to occupy their time and distract them. He talked about historic events, and about his family. Dinah's mother told them about the better life they could expect after the war ended: they would go back to their town, home and school; have real food; and she would make them beautiful dresses and clothes. It was hard for the young children to understand how serious their situation was, but they looked forward to the future, hoping that it would be like earlier times. When Purim and Passover arrived, Dinah's mother told the children holiday stories, and that they would soon be celebrating their holidays again. Her mother seemed optimistic that Hitler would soon be defeated. When the snows melted, the family sometimes ventured outside during the middle of the night, to get some fresh air. They would stay outside for no more than 2 hours at a time, but even this simple act brightened their existence. There was no soap to wash with, only their handfuls of water. Lice were everywhere. Dinah still shivers at the memory of the large amounts of lice that infested everything they contacted or wore.

By May, Dinah's parents were feeling more confident, and the family would venture out to gather mushrooms and berries. This not only provided food, it also served as entertainment, or at least a distraction. When they infrequently made a fire to make hot soup, Bob would ask his mother to put in more water so he could have more to eat. As the weather warmed, they could not get water from the melting snow, so they had to walk one-half hour to a pond. They carried the worm and bug-filled water back in whatever small pots they had, and Dinah's mother would strain the water through some cloth to filter out the crawling things. Even the wormy, bug-filled water was a welcome sight. The children also passed the time playing with sticks and jumping among the tree branches. Each time they went out to play or to gather food, they looked over their shoulders to make sure local peasants, Nazis, or Byelorussian ('White Russian') Partisans were not around. All of these groups would kill Jews they encountered. Hostile partisans would often throw hand grenades into the bunkers they came across, knowing there were Jews inside. Dinah knew three Jewish families that died in this way.

Luckily, Dinah's parents had a good Polish friend who lived nearby. He would warn them when he knew Byelorussian partisans were nearby so her family could leave the bunker and hide in the woods until the partisans left the area. One day, these partisans came and predictably threw hand grenades into their bunker. After this, Dinah's parents built another bunker to have as a second sanctuary. One summer day a forest fire started in the dry forest, and hundreds of local peasants and Germans came into the forest to try to stop the fire. Their Polish farmer friend again warned them, and the family ran to another part of the forest.

When the next winter arrived, there was even less food than the previous winter. Occasionally, Dinah's father found some potatoes growing in the snow-covered fields. Dry bread was now a rare treat. One of the single men that Dinah's father had taken in appeared to have a lot of food, especially bacon. He would sit down to eat with his knife in his hand, and the children would sit and watch him eat. He never offered any food to anybody. This was the life in the bunker.



One day Dinah saw her mother weeping. Molly told Dinah that their mother was going to have a baby. The younger children may have been too young to understand, but the situation was grave. They were alone in the forest with no food, no milk for mother or child, no doctor, and constant fear of capture and death. Her mother wept every day. Dinah's father would sometimes go out in the middle of the night to get some milk from a local farmer or a friendly priest, paying for it with some coins or perhaps fabric. The children would hungrily watch their mother drink this, but knew that they could not ask for any. As the time approached, Dinah's father arranged for a trusted farmer to deliver the baby. Dinah's mother would have to walk 2 miles to the farmer's house. As the labor pains began, Molly and Dinah's mother walked through the lingering April snow, while Dinah's father stayed with the younger children. Molly remembers thinking that she would have to deliver a baby on the wet and cold forest floor if they did not make it to the farmhouse. They arrived in time, and Dinah believes her mother was protected from above because she was so pious and kind. The farmer had a layer of straw ready on the bare wooden floor, without even a sheet. A beautiful baby girl was delivered, and the farmer cut the umbilical cord with his kitchen scissors. The new arrival was named Sarah, after her great grandmother. Sarah's story is a miraculous story, a story of faith and heartbreaking anguish, but a story with a very happy ending.

After a few days, the farmer asked his Jewish guests to leave, as he was afraid that they would all be killed. Molly and her mother carried baby Sarah back to the bunker, where life now became more dangerous. Sarah was constantly fidgety because she was never truly clean, as they used re-washed rags for diapers. She cried constantly because there was never enough milk to calm her. The spring thaws brought numerous stinging insects, and baby Sarah would scream in pain. Everybody was afraid that the local peasants would hear Sarah's cries. The other occupants in the bunker pressured Dinah's parents to "do something" about the baby, to silence her one way or another, as she was endangering them all.

There were few choices, none of them desirable. Dinah's loving parents made the most painful decision of their lives. Dinah's mother was no different than other "Jewish mothers". She was devoted to all her children, and a religious and moral woman. However, Sarah's wailing was putting her other children and the entire family at risk. Dinah's parents had no choice. They tearfully decided to put a pillow over their beloved baby's face, to smother her to death. However, when the fateful moment came, they could bring themselves to complete this agonizing deed.

They then arranged for a Gentile woman to take care of Sarah for the duration of the war. She would be paid when the war ended, and they would take Sarah back. This type of arrangement was made all too frequently in those desperate times. Jewish children were left with Gentile friends, with strangers, and in monasteries. Gentiles who wanted to convert them, to use them as cheap labor, or to make money from the hapless parents, often took in these "hidden children". It was a lucky child who was treated well, and even luckier if eventually re-united with his or her parents, if the parents themselves were lucky enough to survive the war.

Dinah's parents were supposed to leave Sarah by a cross in front of the town church, and the woman was to pretend to find the baby. At the last moment,



however, the Gentile woman thought this would be too dangerous, not to mention the fact that Sarah still cried all the time. So the family remained in the bunker, more scared than ever, still very afraid that Sarah's cries would lead to their death. One of the older men in the bunker said they should keep the baby with them, that maybe her luck that had seen her through so far would bring them all luck. The man was right.

### **A New Beginning**

They kept Sarah, and luck or fate soon turned against the Germans. The Magids family had survived—maybe it was Sarah's luck. Soon the Russians were pushing the Nazis back, and the region was liberated. Hundreds of people who were hiding in the forests straggled out. Hundreds of other people did not make it out of the forests, dying of starvation, cold, disease, and murder. The Magids family went back to their home, but by now their *shtetl* was barely recognizable. Only four Jewish families survived intact from the nearly 2,000 people.

Their home was ransacked and virtually destroyed, with the furniture gone or broken. Dinah's father found a little table and some broken chairs in the ransacked *shtetl*. He worked to earn some money, and was able to buy a little food. They slept on straw piled on the wooden floor, but they felt happy because they thought they were free. However, the war had not ended for the Jews. Many Jews were killed by their Gentile neighbors weeks after the "liberation." Byelorussian partisans actually sought out Jews to kill. They would enter the towns in the middle of the night, go into Jewish homes or places of business, steal what they wanted and then destroy whatever was left. Dinah's family had to hide in the fields several times in the next few months. After several months of this "freedom", Dinah's parents decided to leave Europe, heading for Israel. This vision kept their spirits up.

The family took a train to the large city of Lodz, Poland, their first major stop. The train trip was 'easy', as the family had virtually no belongings to carry. The family did not know anyone in Lodz, but they found a temporary home in the ghetto, an apartment without any doors or windows. It was in a large 'scary building', in which the family witnessed many robberies and killings. A friend told them of a more secure place available on the fifth floor. The rent was higher, so they shared the apartment with another couple. The outhouse was in the back yard, a 5-floor trip down. Dinah's father made a meager income by selling goods in the local flea market. The children were enrolled in the Jewish school, in which they studied for nearly one-and-a-half years. Life was easier than in the forest, but not good.

Entry into Israel was not permitted under the pro-Arab British mandate. However, the Jewish agencies were getting people into Israel from the DP camps. Emigration was illegal, and so Dinah's father found a trucker who crossed the border regularly, and paid him to take them into Germany, hidden under a load of straw. The trucker took them to a small DP camp in the Russian Zone of Berlin. Within a few weeks, they all received a warning to escape to the nearby American Zone, because the Russians were shipping DPs to Russia. A representative of the Jewish Agency and *Aliyah Bet* organized a train out of the Russian Zone, which left in the dead of night. Dinah's family was among the first DPs in the new camp of Schlachtenzee, in Berlin.



They arrived 'dirty, smelly, and hungry', and were given food, soap, and clothes. After 6 months, they were transferred to another DP camp in Ulm, and then to the large Eschwege camp in the American Zone. Eschwege was a Jewish community of over 3,000 refugees, with its own newspaper, synagogues, schools, and even a *Mikveh*. The family occupied one room, where Dinah and Molly shared an army cot. A hallway sink was shared by everyone, and there were two bathhouses (men and women's) for the entire camp. Baths were allowed once a week. The food was served in a central kitchen, and was not tasty, but at least no one went hungry. By this time, it was obvious that the only means of entry into Israel would be by the illegal '*Aliyah Bet*' route, running the British blockade. This would have been difficult with even older children, let alone 2-year-old Sarah. At the same time, Israel was in the midst of its War of Independence, and life for new arrivals there was difficult.

The family decided to come to America, but the wait was expected to be 5 years. Dinah's parents did not want their children to go to the German public schools, "soaking with Jewish blood." The children were therefore sent to a Hebrew school in Munich, the center of pre-war German Jewry. The train trip to Munich took nearly 12 hours. Life was difficult, far from their parents, not knowing the language. Molly was the oldest at age 17, and was "in charge" of Dinah and Bob. They had a small room on the fourth floor of a building, where they prepared their own food, and hauled coal up the stairs for cooking and heating. The children spent most of their time going to school and doing homework. If they had enough money, they would go to a movie, or rent books from the library, which they had to return in 2 days. They visited their parents 3 times a year—on Chanukah, Passover, and Shavuot.

One day Molly came with some news. She had met a man whom she planned to marry, a tall, handsome war survivor named Leon Weinstein. Leon was from their area, and was 'selected' for the infamous mass killing in the Ponari forest. He jumped off the transport train, and otherwise would no doubt have joined the nearly 100,000 other Jews massacred in Ponari. They got married in Eschwege, and were able to leave for America before the others. Sometime during these years, the family also spent some time in the U.S. controlled Foehrenwald DP camp near Munich, one of the largest camps in Germany, and the last one to close, in 1957.

Within 4 four years, the rest of the Magids family started their journey to America. From Bremen, they were put on a cargo ship for the trip to New York, on which everyone was seasick the entire 2 weeks. They passed the Statue of Liberty, crying at the sight. Molly and Leon were on shore to greet their family. The JOINT Distribution Agency representatives took them by bus to the HIAS, where they were given some money and a temporary room in a HIAS "hotel". Here they ate in a communal dining room with 800 other refugees. It was exciting and scary to be in this strange new land. Dinah soon found a job in a watch factory doing "piece work". She earned barely \$35 a week, which she gave to her mother.

Within 2 weeks, her parents and Molly found an apartment to share in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. They moved in while Dinah was at work, and so Dinah's first trip to this new home was after work, and at night. Dinah got terribly lost, and wandered around for hours. In tearful desperation, she got up the courage to ask a stranger for directions, not even knowing if he understood Yiddish. He felt so sorry for this



poor young girl that he took her all the way home. Dinah also went to night school, and received a coveted diploma. She went right from work, skipped dinner, and did not get home until 11 p.m. Her major decision then was to sleep or to eat.

When Dinah reached the age of 18, her mother started 'encouraging' her to get married. It took 3 years for Dinah to meet somebody "to her liking". Dinah's friend Gloria Kozlowski had a brother Joe, whom she introduced to Dinah. Joe was another Holocaust survivor, a shy, thin man who must have been to Dinah's liking. Dinah and Joe married in 1954, and they moved into a 3-bedroom apartment on Shepherd Avenue in Brooklyn's East New York section, a very desirable neighborhood then. This was just around the corner from her in-laws, Chaim and Leah Kozlowski, who treated her 'just like a daughter'. It was also a short walk to the apartment of Joe's sister, Ida Segal, and her family. By the time Dinah was 22 years her life had turned around from years of despair to what she considered the happiest time in her life.

Soon the Kazlow's first son was born—Philip Gary. By now Joe was a baker, having gone through many work experiences in America. Joe soon bought a bakery in Glen Oaks, Queens with his cousin, Joe Kazlow. Joe would travel to work by trains and buses, leaving for work before daylight and arriving home late at night. They therefore decided to move closer to their store, but Dinah was not happy about moving away from her family. Their daughter Gloria Debra was born in the one-bedroom garden apartment in Glen Oaks Village. Gloria was named after Joe's sister, who had been killed just one year earlier by a drunken driver. In this horrible way, the family that had survived The Holocaust lost their first family member.

Soon Dinah and Joe bought their first home in Bayside Queens, borrowing \$5,000 from her parents and \$4,000 from Joe's parents, small fortunes in those days. Dinah's parents also bought the attached home. Later, they moved to an attractive ranch house in Bellrose. Philip and Gloria went to the Yeshiva of Central Queens. Philip graduated from Mount Sinai Medical Center, and then worked as a pediatric gastroenterologist. Gloria went to Queens College and graduated as a teacher. As of 2001, Dinah and Joe Kazlow have nine grandchildren. Dinah and Joe are active in their *schul*, travel frequently for vacations—including to Israel, and have re-visited Belarus. Dinah has come a long, long way from the *shtetl* of Varnjany and the bunkers in the forests, and she has had many years of well-deserved happiness.

**In 1998, Dinah, her brother Bob, and some relatives visited Varnjany.** Amazingly, her family's home was still intact, although it looked run-down and a lot smaller than Dinah's cheerful childhood recollections. The town itself was terribly shabby and neglected, with goats and other farm animals wandering around the littered streets. The flowered and tree-lined streets were unkempt, and depressing. The occupants of Dinah's former home did not allow her to enter to look around, and were not friendly. Not surprisingly, virtually no Jews remained in the town.



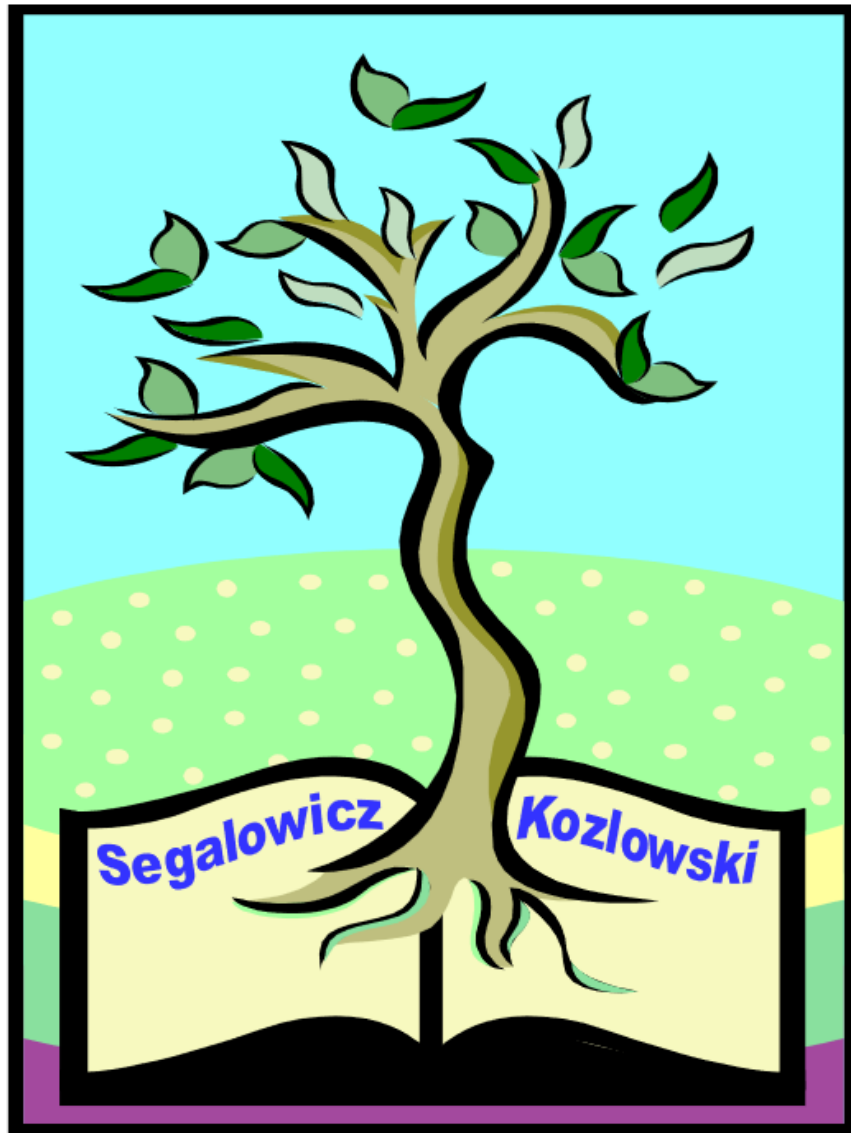
<b><u>The Segal Family Timeline</u></b>		
<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>The World</u></b>	<b><u>Our Family</u></b>
1795-1882	Jews confined to Russia's 'Pale of Settlement'	
<b><u>1904</u></b>	Russo-Japanese War	Ida's grandfather Aaron Lipchin comes to U.S.; returns because it is a ' <i>goyishe</i> land'
July 15, <b><u>1920</u></b>		Reuven Segalowicz born in <i>shtetl</i> of Ivenets
May 15, <b><u>1922</u></b>		Chaya Kozlowski born in village of Mishukovitz, near <i>shtetl</i> of Ivye
<b><u>1929</u></b>	Great Depression begins	Rubin's father Leib, dies
<b><u>1932</u></b>		Rubin's Bar Mitzvah, at age of 12
<b><u>1933</u></b> Jan. 30	Hitler/Nazism come to power	Ida and Marcia attend school in Ivye, live with their Aunt Rivka Baksht. Rubin lives in same house, living with his grandmother in a rented room
March - July	Dachau, Buchenwald, other concentration camps opened	
<b><u>1934</u></b>	Hitler proclaims himself Führer	
<b><u>1935</u></b>	Jews lose German citizenship	
<b><u>1936</u></b>	SS Death's Head Divisions formed	Rubin leaves school to support family; becomes house painter
<b><u>1938</u></b> Spring	German Jews must register all property	Rubin and his friends bash an anti-Semitic gang who beat them earlier
Nov.	Kristallnacht	
<b><u>1939</u></b>	Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact	
Sept. 1	Germany invades Poland; WW II starts	Russia occupies Belarus, including Ivye and Ivenets
Sept. 27	Poland surrenders; Nazis start slave labor for Jews 14 to 60	Ida goes to Russian nursing school in Slonim. Rubin returns to Ivenets.
<b><u>1940</u></b> January	Polish Jewish ghetto youth resistance begins	Ida attends nursing school in Slonim. Rubin works in USSR collective as painter
<b><u>1941</u></b> March	Eichmann appointed head of Gestapo Dep't. of Jewish Affairs	
June	Germany invades Russia; 'Killing Squads' begin carnage	Germany occupies Ivye & Ivenets; Rubin sees 75 men selected & shot
July		Ida returns from Slonim
August 3		225 Jews shot in Ivye on <i>Tisha B'Av</i>
Oct.	Death camp deportations begins	Rubin and family forced into Ivenets ghetto
<b><u>1942</u></b> May 12	Wansee conference Jan. 20; decision to murder all Jewry	"Great Slaughter" in Ivye, 2500 Jews killed; Ivye ghetto formed; Jewish partisans start
May	Poison gas killing begins in Sobibor; 250,000 Jews killed	Sonia's children killed; Rubin flees ghetto, joins Partisans; Ivenets ghetto liquidated
Nov.		Ida & Marcia escape from Ivye ghetto
Dec. 25		Ivye ghetto liquidated; Ida & Rubin married in Russian Partisans



<b><u>The Segal Family Timeline</u></b>		
<b><u>1943</u></b>	German Army surrenders at Stalingrad	Ivye ghetto liquidated; others taken to Borisow concentration camp
January		
Jan. 20	Warsaw ghetto resistance	No Jews remain in Ivye
May 3	Bielski's Partisans formed	
Summer	'Big Hunt' in Nalibocki Forest	Rubin escapes Nazi's 'Big Hunt'
<b><u>1944</u></b>		
June 6	Allied invades Normandy.	Rubin & Ida and Kozlowski family join Bielski's Partisans
July	Russia liberates Belarus	Rubin and Ida go to Ivenets to look for mother's grave and family
October	Inmates blow up Auschwitz crematorium	Rubin drafted into Russian military, fights anti-Russian insurgents
<b><u>1945</u></b>		
Winter	Concentration camp death marches	Family decides to head for Israel
April 30	Hitler commits suicide	
July		Family arrives in Poland
Aug. 31		Leibel Segalowicz born in Lodz, Poland
Oct.		Family arrives in Austria
<b><u>1946</u></b>		
	Less than 300,000 Jews alive in Poland out of 3.3 million pre-war	Family arrives in DP camp in Austria
Jan. 17, <b><u>1947</u></b>		Reyzelle Segalowicz born in Braunau, Austria [Hitler's birthplace]
Summer		Family crosses Italian Alps on foot
<b><u>1948</u></b>		
May 14	State of Israel formed; Israeli War of Independence	Family in DP camps in Italy
<b><u>1949</u></b>		
Aug. 31		Segalowicz family obtains visas to U.S. on Leon's 4 <sup>th</sup> birthday
Nov. 21		Segal family arrives in New York. Names changed from Reuven, Chaya, Leib, and Reyzel Segalowicz to Rubin, Ida, Leon and Rosaline Segal
<b><u>1953</u></b>		
May 15, <b><u>1954</u></b>		Gloria Kozlowski killed by drunk driver Aaron Gary Segal born
<b><u>1955</u></b>		
		Segals buy first home, at 1351 E. 10th Street, Brooklyn NY
<b><u>1964</u></b>		
		Ida and Rubin's first trip to Israel
Oct. 16, <b><u>1966</u></b>		
		David Harvey Segal born
<b><u>1983</u></b>		
		Segals move to home in Belle Harbor, NY
July <b><u>2000</u></b>		
		Rubin's 80 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party
April <b><u>2002</u></b>		
		Ida and Rubin visit Israel during Palestinian 'homicide bombing' rampage
May <b><u>2002</u></b>		
		Ida's 80 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party
Dec. <b><u>2002</u></b>		
		Ida & Rubin's 60 <sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary



# Our Family Tree

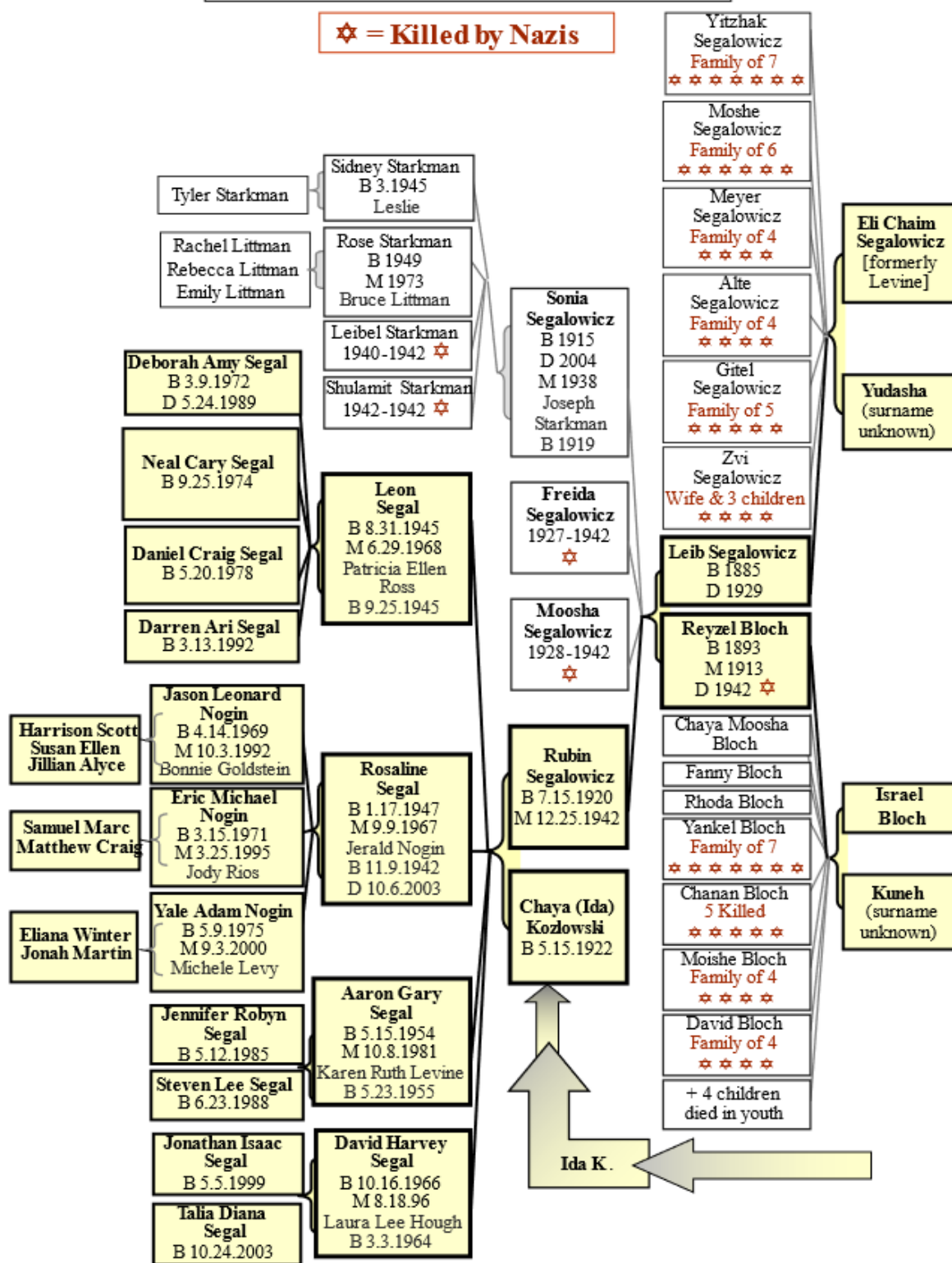




# SEGALOWICZ FAMILY TREE

July 2005

☆ = Killed by Nazis

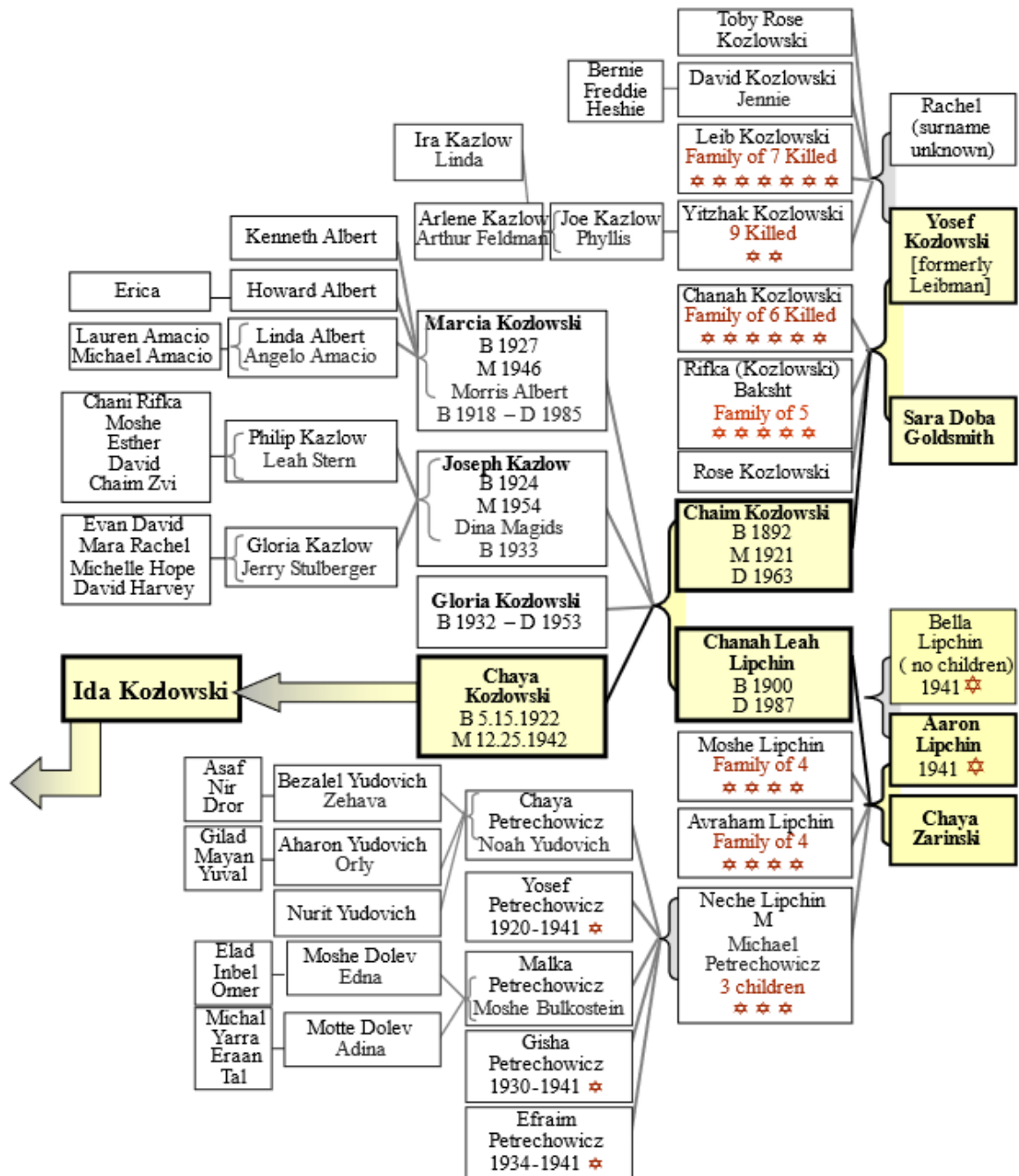




# KOZLOWSKI FAMILY TREE

July 2005

☆ = Killed by Nazis





## Map of Belarus

- Ivey: *shtetl* near Mishukovitz, Ida Kozlowski's home village
- Ivenets: home *shtetl* of Rubin Segalowicz
- ☆☆☆☆☆
- Novogrudok: large city
- Karelich: home town of Lipchin family (Ida's mother)
- Mir: famous town, where Rubin studied with his uncle
- Michaliski (Michalischauk): *shtetl* near Varnjany (Dina Magids's home)





## A horizontal scale bar with vertical end caps. Below the bar, the text "500 miles" is written.





## *The Descendants' Legacy*

*Taken from 'Living the Legacy', Chicago 2002*



As a descendant of Survivors of the Shoah, I recognize my place in Jewish history and accept the obligations of this pledge.

I was born in a place and time far removed from the darkness and horrors that my ancestors endured. However, through their memories and the stories I have heard, I know what they endured. I know of where they came, who they were, and what they have become. I know of the attempt to annihilate the lives, culture, and spirit of my family and the Jewish people.

I dedicate this pledge to my ancestors, who suffered, endured and survived and, also, to those who were less fortunate:

To those Jews who were murdered - men, women and children, I say, I shall not forget.

To the Jewish life destroyed - in its variety and splendor, I say, I shall not forget. I pledge to remember.

To those who risked their own lives in pursuit of justice and saved Jews, I say, I shall not forget and I shall learn by your example.

*I promise* to ask questions and not be afraid. If it is too late to ask my ancestors, I shall ask others who survived. I shall read testimonies and listen to audio and video accounts so as not to forget.

*I promise* to learn and then teach my children the stories and history of that time.

*I promise* commitment to the existence of the State of Israel.

*I promise* commitment to embracing a life of Jewish values and shall actively support Jewish life in my homeland.

As I learned from my ancestors—all Jews were tortured regardless of Jewish practice or belief. All Jews are connected and bound by history. I am dedicated to the unity of the Jewish people.

I am proud of the strength and courage of my ancestors.  
I am a descendant of the Shoah.

**I am here to remember and continue the legacy.**







Chanah Leah: Italy; ~1948



Ida at ~15 yrs., Iyve;  
in Betar uniform: 1937



Chaim Kozlowski: Italy; ~1948



Joe, 9 yrs.;  
Marcia, 6 yrs.



Marcia, Gloria, Ida: Italy, 1948



Chaim, Leah, Ida: Iyve, ~1923



IVYE, Bridge Street: 1920s; signs in German (military cafeteria)  
from WWI German occupation. Jews were marched down  
this street past the church, beaten, then murdered at Stonevitsch.





Leah, Chaim, Ida, Sara Doba (Chaim's mother),  
Chaim's niece & sister Rifka: Ivye, 1923



Israel Bloch:  
Hadera, 1990

Kuneh Bloch & grandson Israel  
(Rubin's cousin): Ivye, 1938



Ida, nursing school Honor Roll photo:  
Slonim, Byelorussia, 1939

לשנה טובה  
תבואה



Lipchin family, 1933 New Years Card: (relation to Leah)  
Back: Abraham (brother), Moshe's wife Zlote; Yitzhak, Zvi, Chaim (cousins).  
Middle: Shifra-Abraham's wife, Moshe holding daughter Chaya;  
Aaron (father) & 2nd wife Bella; Gloria & Leah;  
Front: Joe, Marcia, Zalman ( Moshe's son). Ida was in school in Ivye.



Old schul: Ivye, 1900's



Typical badge Jews  
were forced to sew  
onto their clothes.  
Armbands or 2nd  
patches were also  
mandatory.



**The two existing photos of Rubin's mother, Roslyn. No photos of father Leib exist.**



**Sonia, Frieda, Moosha, Roslyn,  
Rubin S.: Ivenets, 1930**



**Frieda & Moosha S.:  
Ivenets, 1930**



**Rubin: Italy, 1948-49**



**Rubin's maternal grandmother;  
Kuneh Bloch: Ivey, 1935**

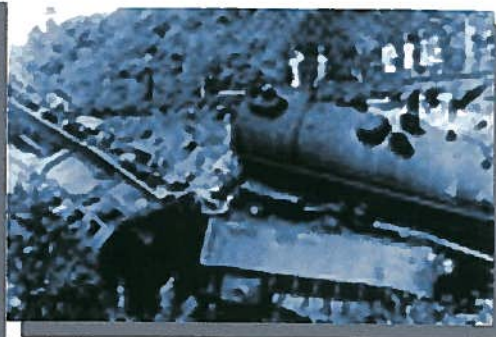


**Roslyn Segalowicz & Sonia: Ivenets, ~1916**





Joe, Marcia, Ida, Rubin: Ivey, 1944. The clothing is civilian garb made from uniforms.



German trains demolished by partisans. Museum photos.



Bielski Partisans; Joe K. 2nd from right, top: Nalibocki Forest, Byelorussia; 1944.



Example of entrance to underground hiding place in which Jews hid in the forests.



## SCENES FROM THE NALIBOCKI FOREST







Gloria, Marcia, cousin Joe, Chaim,  
Joe, Leah: Italy, 1947



Rubin S., passport photo:  
Italy, 1949



Ida passport photo:  
Italy, 1949



Marcia, Leah, Gloria:  
Italy DP camp, 1947



Gloria: Italy, 1948



Marcia, ~21: Italy, 1948



Joe K.: Italy, 1947



'cousin Joe' K.: Italy, 1947



Sonia & Joe Starkman: Ivenets, 1938



Italy, 1947. Ida & Rubin were in Austria at this time.



Joe, cousin Joe, Morris A.; front-Gloria, Leah, Chaim, Marcia



Marcia, Joe & Gloria



Gloria



Zaydee Chaim



Gloria



Chaim, cousin Joe, Leah



Joe K. & cousin Joe K.: Rome (Coliseum)



Leah and Marcia





Ida, Leon, Rubin: Ronshaufen DP camp, Austria; 1946



Leon: Austria,  
9 months



Leon: Austria, 1946;  
Alpaca wool coat by Ida



Ida, Roz, Leon, Rubin: Austria, 1948



Roz, 3 months: Austria, 1947



Ida, Roz at 3 months: Austria, 1947





Rubin & Leon at 4 months:  
Austria, 1945



Leon: Austria, 1947



Leon: Austria, 1947



Gloria, Roz, Joe: Italy, 1948



Ida, Roz, & Leon: Italy DP camp, 1948



Ida, Roz & Leon:  
Italy DP camp, 1948



Leon: 9 mos., Austria



Leah, Joe, Marcia, Gloria:  
Italy DP camp, 1947





Leah and Joe: Italy, 1947



Gloria & Marcia:  
Lodz, Poland; 1945



Bubbee Leah, Roz & Leon: Italy, 1948



Marcia, Leah, Gloria: Italy, 1948



Leon & Roz: Italy DP camp, 1948



cousin Joe K. & Gloria K.:  
Rome, 1947



Chaim, Gloria, Leah, Rubin, Ida,  
Leon & Roz: Salerno DP camp,  
quonset hut barracks; 1949



Rubin, Leon, Ida: Austria DP camp: 1946



Roz: Italy, 1948





Leon: Italy DP camp, 1949



Ida & Rubin:  
Salerno, Italy; 1949



Leon on rocking horse:  
Austria, 1947



Ida, Leon, Roz: Salerno: 1949



Leon & Roz: Italy, 1948.  
Sweaters & skirt  
knitted by Rubin.



Chaim & Leah:  
Rome, 1948



Chaim, Leah, Marcia, Morris: Via Latina DP camp, Rome; 1948



Marcia & Gloria:  
Italy DP camp, 1947





Roz, Leon & friends: DP camp, 1948



Marcia, Joe, Gloria: Italy, 1948



Rubin, Ida, Leah, Joe, Roz, Gloria: Italy DP camp, 1948



Leon:  
Italy, 1948



Ivenets: marker for  
Jewish mass graves



Ida at ORT sewing class: Italy, 1948



Joe & Leon: Austria, 1947





3.12.1946

The Jewish Settlement Committee  
Das jüdische Siedlungsausschuss in

*Sagalowitz*  
Name  
336865  
D. P. number - Juden-Nummer  
is resident of the Settlement 609  
ist Einwohner der Siedlung 609

13  
Haar

*Ranshofen A.*  
Signature of the holder  
Unterschrift des Inhabers des Karte

U.S. 095248  
UNITED STATES  
DP IDENTIFICATION CARD

Name *SEGALOWITZ*  
Age *15*  
Date of birth *15. IV. 19*  
Weight *66 kg*  
Height *155*  
Hair *dark fair*  
Eyes *blue*  
Nationality *Jewish (Polish)*  
National ID *SEGALOWITZ RUBIN*  
OF Signature DP University

Scars or identifying marks  
Narben oder besondere Markenzeichen

Fingerprint Right Thumb  
Fingerabdruck rechte Daumen  
15.2.45  
Date of entry US Occupied Zone, Austria or Germany  
Datum des Eintrags in die US-besetzten Zone, Österreich oder Deutschland

Specialized to  
Spezialisiert auf  
Active reportant nach  
Aktive Berichterstatter nach

RAMAN ALMAN  
Name and Rank of issuing US-Camp, British or UNRRA Office  
Name und Rang des ausstellenden US-Camp, Britischen oder UNRRA-Amtes

Official Stamp  
Official Stamp

46

Ranshofen Austria DP camp 609  
Identity Cards: 1946





Betar Group in Ronshausen Austria DP camp;  
Most left for Israel with Bricha soon after photo taken.  
Ida 2nd from right, Rubin 2nd from left: Italy, 1948



Uncle Dave & Tante Jennie:  
Powell St., 1940s

Ida's Betar membership card:  
Linz, Austria; 1947

ZIONISTISCHE REW. ORG.  
IN ÖSTERREICH  
Zentralkomitee Linz

Mitgliedskarte Nr. 417

Vor- und Zuname: *Ida Rubin*

Wohnhaft: *Braun*

Geboren am: *1922*

Linz, am: *10. 11. 47*

Vorsitzende: *[Signature]*

Sekretär: *[Signature]*

הסתדרות הציונים הרביונים  
הפאודרת באוסטריה  
מרכזו בלינץ

כרטיס חבר מס' 417

השם והשם המשפחה: *Ida Rubin*

התאריך: *10. 11. 47*

שנת תכנייה לחניכה: *1922*

תאריך: *1922*

שולח דוד: *[Signature]*

דיוט והשכלה: *[Signature]*

לינץ, א. 10. 11. 47

דיוט: *[Signature]*

מס' 417

דאקארטע Nr. 417

הסדרת הציונים

(Unterschrift)



Former Iyve shul;  
now 'sports club', ~1990



Joe, Gloria, & Joe



Marcia and Joe say goodbye to cousin Joe  
before he leaves for U.S.: Via Latina, Rome; 1947



PRETURA UNIFICATA DI ROMA

ATTO DI NOTORIETÀ

L'anno millenovecento quar  
addì ventotto de:  
in Roma e nei locali di quest  
Innanzi a Noi dott. U. A.  
Pretore, assistiti dal sott  
è compars. 1 Sig. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ SAC \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 quale chiede che veng  
resse propria figlia  
\_\_\_\_\_

atto di notorietà, per dim  
presso verrà dichiarato da  
che all'uopo presenta.

11 Pretore dato atto de  
noscuita l'idoneità della persona indicata a de-  
porre, ammonisce le stesse sulla importanza reli-  
giosa e morale del giuramento e sulle conseguenze  
penali delle dichiarazioni false o reticenti e  
legge la formula: "Consapevole della responsabilità  
che con il giuramento assumete davanti a Dio e  
agli uomini, giurate di dire la verità, null'altro

RUOLO AFFARI CIVILI  
NON CONTENZIOSI

N. \_\_\_\_\_  
Anno 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Roma, 11 29 Apr 1940

Si legalizza da  
Luigi Rivalta  
Roma 29/4/40

IL SINDACATO

UFFICIO

TRANSLATION

FIGURA OF ROMS-----~~NOTED PUBLIC~~.....

ACT OF NOTARIETY

On the 28.4.1949 at Roma

before us, Dr. Aviano in..... there appeared  
Mr. (Mrs.)..... AGAGIOTIS ROMBA (proctor - notary) and secretary  
who requested that the following act of notariety be made on his(her)  
behalf.

The proctor (notary) having admonished the person concerned and  
his witnesses of the significance and of the legal consequences of a  
false or evasive declaration then read the following statement: "Aware  
of the responsibility which you take before God and the people you  
swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth".

Then the witnesses, standing take the oath, pronouncing one after  
the other the words "I swear".

Questioned about their particulars, they declared:-

1) Indovanni Chais  
of "AS"..... resident at Castelgandolfo  
born in Tivoli

2) Kleiana Mosco, of 39, born in Ostrovitsa, resident at Roma IIIA Castelgandolfo

3) Wizniowski Nemes of 46 years, born in Novogrod, resident at Roma "

4) Simas Lenas " 35 " " Breslau " " " "

5) Awardard Kleianova " 51 " " Rodi " " " "

Questioned further, they answered separately and in turn as  
follows:-

CONFIDENTIAL



**Marine Jumper Health Inspection tags, attached to Roz (top) and Leon: 1949**

IV Rip. - Mod. 1041

COMUN  
Ufficio del

CRITICO E 15  
D'UGUZZA

ato di nascita

Prot. N.

RICHIESTA DELLA  
DELEGAZIONE

L'Ufficiale dello stato civile

CERTIFICA

che Luigibonno

di Roma

figli } di Antonia

e di Giorgio

è nat. in ROMA

il giorno dieci del mese di Gennaio

dell'anno mille 900

come risulta dal registro degli ATTI DI NASCITA dell'anno 1942

Parte II Serie 1117 N. 1920

Si rilascia in carta libera per

Roma, li

L'Impiegato

194

Ufficiale dello stato civile

Stampa: COMUNE DI ROMA

**Rosaline Birth Certificate, proving her birth in Italy  
(she was born in Austria)**







Gloria, Joe, Leah, Chaim, aunt Rose (Chaim's sister),  
cousin Joe, uncle Dave, tante Jennie: Brooklyn, 1950



Roz: 1949



Leon: 1949



Ida & Rubin: E. 10 St.; 1959;  
cabinets made by Rubin



Joe & Phyllis K. wedding: Brooklyn, 1951;  
Morris, Marcia, Rubin, Chaim, Gloria, Joe;  
Ida, Leah, Roz, Leon. Roz's dress made by Ida



Freddie & Gloria Kozlow wedding, 1949:  
cousin Joe, Morris, Marcia, Joe, Gloria;  
Jennie & Dave, Ida, Leah, Chaim; Leon & Roz



Gloria, 1949



Roz & Leon at Joe & Dina K.  
wedding: 1953; dress by Ida





'Aunt Rose from Albany' (Chaim's sister),  
Uncle Dave K. and Tante Jennie.



Joe & Gloria K.: 1949



Ida & Dina: 1956



Roz & Leon: 1951



Uncle Dave & Tante Jennie K.: 1950s



Roz, Leon & Aaron, 1954



Well-fed: 1953



Gloria K.



Leon: 1958



Ida, Roz, Leon, Rubin: Belmont Ave., 1954



Roz & Leon, just before  
Roz trip to Israel: 1964



Aaron Bar Mitzvah: 1967





Leah: Gloria Stulberger wedding



David S. Bar Mitzvah: 1979



Rubin, Ida & grandchildren: 1979  
Yale, Eric, Jason, Neal, Debbie



Aaron & David: 1980



David & Leon: 1968



Danny, Rubin, Neal: 1989



Roz 'Sweet 16': 1963; Roz, Rubin, Ida, Leah;  
Philip K., Aaron, Ira K.; Gloria K, Arlene K.;  
Phyllis K., Miriam from Herzlia; Dina.  
Curtains, unholstery, Roz dress made by Ida



Israel: 1978



Debbie, Neal, Danny: 1982



Rubin, Debbie, Ida: Deb's Bat Mitzvah, 1984





Neal, Danny, Patti, Debbie, Ida, Leon, Rubin:

Neal's Bar Mitzvah 1987



Patti & Deb: Jerusalem, 1987



Debbie: Caesaria, 1987



Debbie: 1989



Debbie: HS junior year  
class photo, 1988



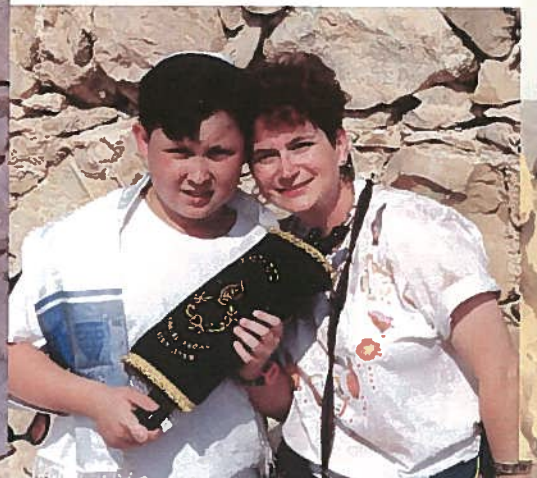
Danny: Masada, 1987



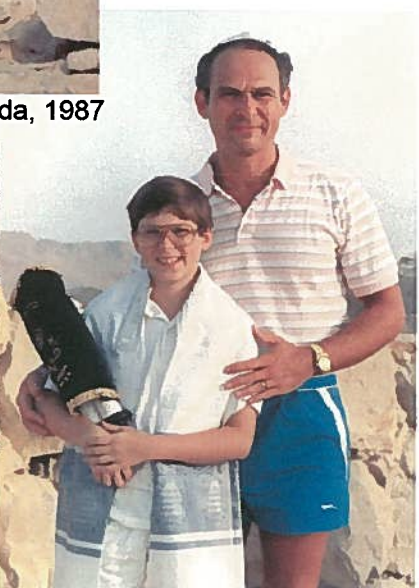
Debbie: Israel, 1987



Debbie Bat Mitzvah:  
Masada, 1984



Patti & Danny: Bar Mitzvah on Masada, 1991



Leon & Neal: Bar Mitzvah,  
Masada; 1987





Ida & Rubin in Israel



Leon & Patty: 1989



Patti, Neal, Leon, Danny: 1991



Danny



Neal



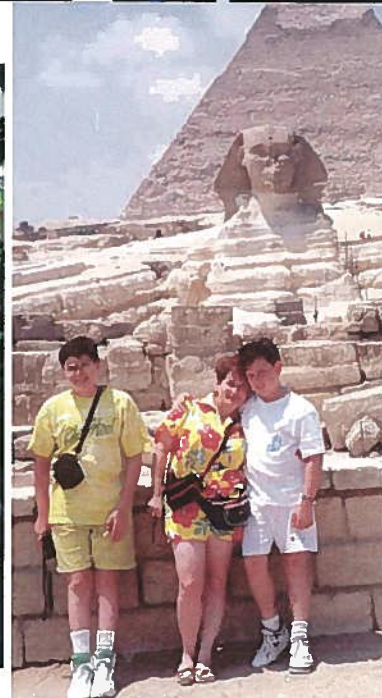
Neal, Leon, Darren, Danny



Patti & Darren: Chanukah, 2001



Neal, Debbie, Patti, Danny:  
Neal's Bar Mitzvah 1987



Neal, Patti, Danny: Egypt, 1991

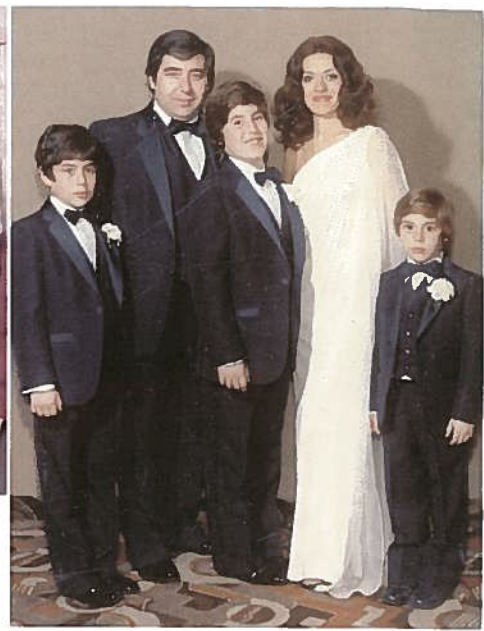




Roz & Jerry



Ida, Roz at 16, Rubin: 1963



Jason's Bar Mitzvah:



Jason



Jason & Debbie



Jason  
& Eric



Harrison, Suzy, Jillian, Rubin, Ida, Sammy



Harrison & Suzy



Yale



Eric N. Bar Mitzvah: Leon, Patti, Karen, Aaron, Helen Gilmer, Jerry, Roz, Rubin, David, Eric, Leah, Ida, Yale, Jason, Neal, Danny, Debbie





Eric & Bubbee Leah:



Eric, Roz, Rubin, Jerry, Jason:



Rubin, Eric, Ida



Eric



Eric, Jason, Tante Jennie



Eric, Sammy, Jody



Matthew & Sammy  
Nogin: 2001



Matthew, Jody, Sammy, Eric



Jody & Eric: 1993





Suzy, Matthew, Roz, Jillian, Harrison



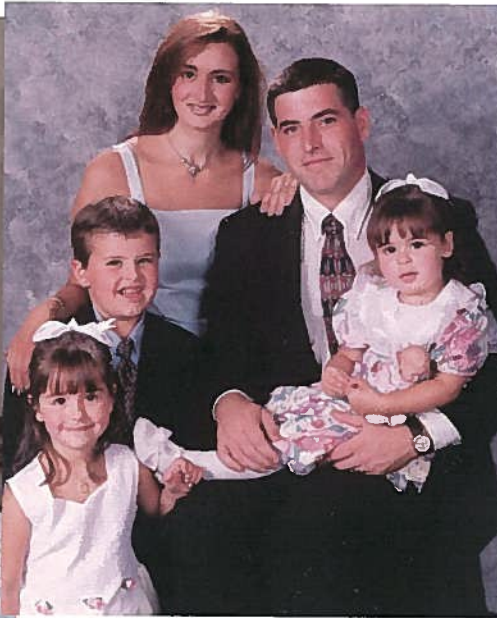
Harrison



Jason's Bar Mitzvah



Bonnie & Jason



Suzy, Harrison, Bonnie, Jason, Jillian



Yale



Yale & Michelle



Michelle & Yale



Karen, Danny, Aaron; Debbie, Eric, Patti, Leon, Neal, Yale, Jerry: Sand Lake Hotel





Leon, Patti, Rubin, Ida, Karen, Aaron, Roz, Jerry;  
David, Danny, Neal, Debbie, Yale, Eric, Jason



Jennifer



Karen, Aaron, Jennifer; Ida, Steve, Rubin



Steven



Steven, Jennifer, Karen, Aaron: 2000



Steven, Karen, Aaron, Jennifer



Bubbee & Aaron



Steven & Jennifer





Phyllis, Rubin, Ida, Marcia: Venice



Steven, Aaron, Karen, Jennifer



David, Leon, Patti: 1968



Leon, Patti, Roz & Jerry: Alaska, 2002



Aaron & Roz: 2001

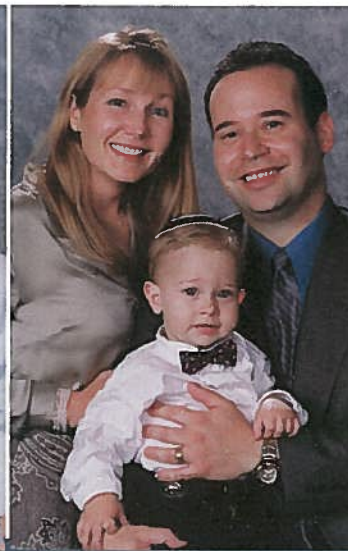


Jason, Danny, Eric, Debbie, Yale, Neal: 1987





Rubin, Jonathan, Ida: 2001



Laura, David,  
& Jonathan



Laura, David, Jonathan: 2001



Rubin at David's ufruf, 1996



Ida, Rubin, Laura, Jonathan, Darren, Leon, Pat



Rubin & Ida



Aaron, David, Roz, Leon





Jason, Eric, Yale, Darren, Leon, Danny, Aaron, Neal  
Jody, Jerry, Laura & David, Karen, Suzy  
Bonny, Roz, Rubin, Ida, Patti; Jennifer, Harrison, Steven



David, Debbie, Aaron, Leah, Roz, Karen,  
Danny, Ida, Patti, Neal, Yale, Jennifer



Yale, Eric, Debbie, Bubbee,  
Danny, Neal, Jennifer



Marcia, Rubin, Ida, Matthew, Sonia, Roz

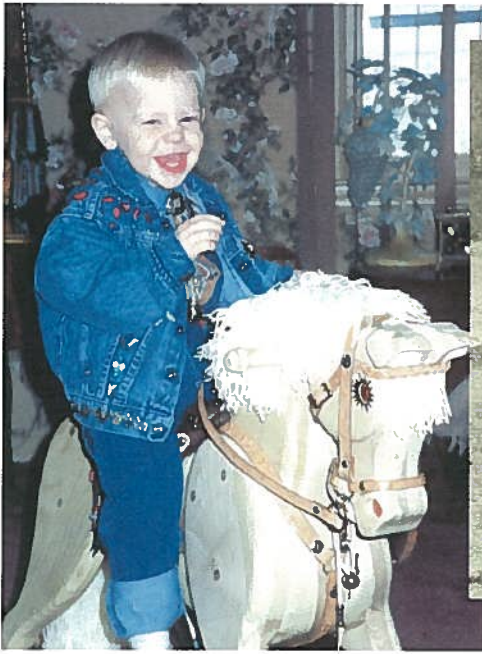


Patti, Debbie, Roz, Bubbee Leah, Ida, Karen



Jerry, Roz, Neal, Karen, Jennifer, Aaron, Leon, Patti  
David, Laura, Ida, Rubin, Darren, Steven, Harrison, Suzy





Darren S., 1993; New Jersey.  
Rocking horse made by Leon.



Leon: DP camp,  
Austria; 1947



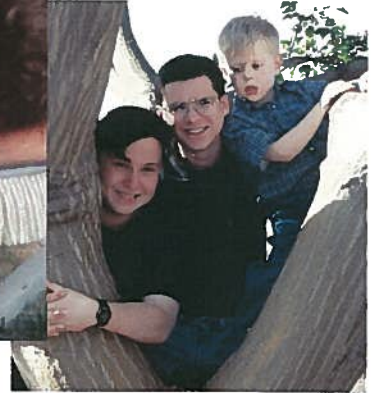
Jennifer, Steven, Darren: 1996



Rubin & Ida



Neal, Jennifer, Yale, Danny, Debbie: Belle Harbor NY



Danny, Neal, Darren



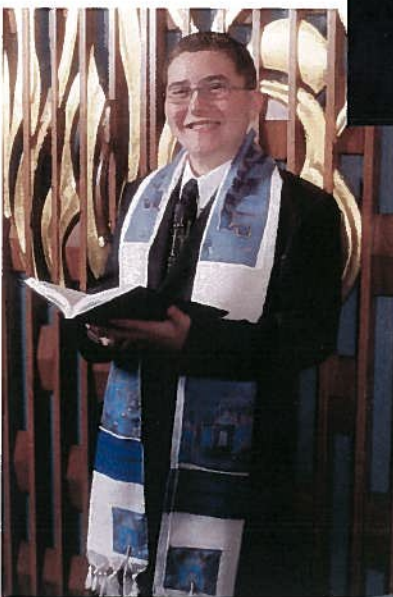
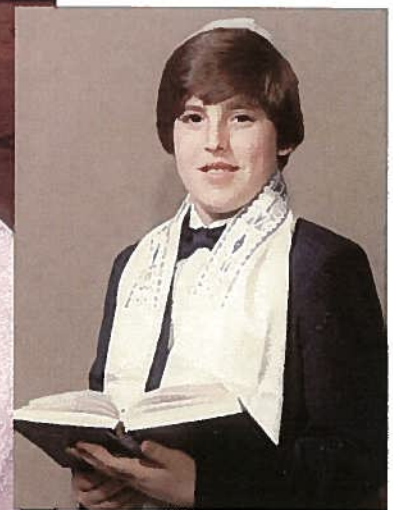
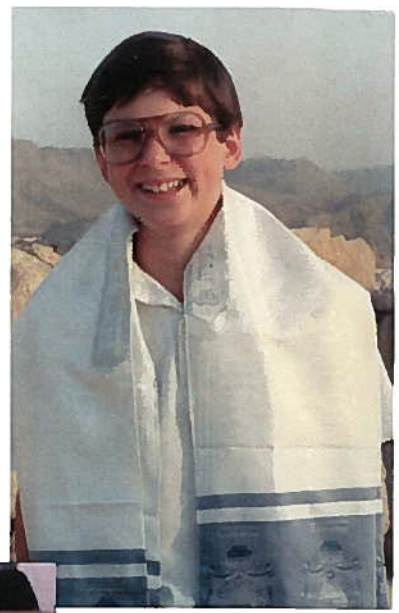
Darren, Harrison, Steven: 1996



Darren, Suzy, Harrison, Steven: 1996



## Grandchildren Bar & Bat Mitzvahs







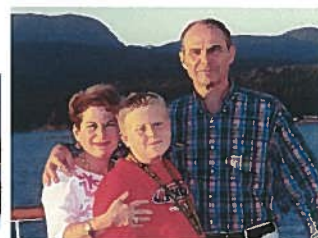
Bernia, Rubin, Ida, Tante Jennie at 99 yrs.



David, Aaron, Roz, Leon: Commack NY; 1989



Jason, Eric, Jody, Jennifer, Aaron, Roz, Jerry, David, Leon, Patti  
Bonny, Karen, Matthew, Rubin, Jillian, Ida, Laura, Jonathan, Nurit  
Darren, Suzy, Steven, Harrison



Patti, Darren, Leon: Alaska, 2002



Neal, Aaron, Jerry, Roz, David, Leon, Danny  
Karen, Rubin, Ida, Patti, Steven, Jennifer, Darren



Leon, Patti, Aaron, Ida, Rubin, Dina;  
Seated: Roz, Jerry, Karen, Marcia





Rubin, Marcia, Ida, David: Passover Seder



David, Jonathan, Rubin, Laura, Ida



Jon: 1 year David, 1 yr.



David, Debbie, Jason



Laura, Jonathan, David



David



1996: Harrison, Eric, Jason, Jerry, Yale, Leon, Danny, Aaron, Neal  
Leah, Chani, Philip, Jerry, Jody, Bonny, Roz, Laura, David, Karen, Jennifer, Laura  
Gloria, Joe, Dina, Rubin, Ida, Marcia, Patti, Linda  
Michelle, Moshe, Esther, David, Suzy, Steven, Michael, Darren





Marcia, Howard, Morris Albert:



Marcia & Linda: 1999



Kenneth Albert: 1961



Lauren, Linda,  
Michael Amacio:  
1999



Morris, Linda, Marcia A.: 1966



Linda & Marcia Albert: 1965



Linda & Bubbee: 1964





Friends: Chai Feygel & Armand Rosenberg, Miriam & Joe Gumnitz, Cy & Hennie G  
Front: Joseph & Sarah Levine, Peter & Chaya Chodosz, Rachel Boyarski



Bezael, Leon, Ahuva, Zahava: NJ, 2000



Friends: Chaim Negev, Marcia, Joe, Bernie, Bernice, Sol Coh  
'Krieger', Leah, Teibel, tante Jennie, Ruth Cohen



Neal, Aaron, Jerry, Roz, David, Leon, Danny  
Karen, Rubin, Ida, Patti, Steven, Jennifer, Darren



Nurit & Patti:  
NY, 1980s



Linda & Ira, David Zelig, Jonathan Michael, Miriam Elana;  
Joe & Phyllis, Arlene & Arthur, Michael Judah, Emily Sarah, Abby Miriam: 1990s





*Nevele country club*  
Marcia: Fallsburgh, NY; 1949



Marcia & Leah: Europe, 1947

*The NEVELE Country Club*



Marcia & Kenney: White Lake, Catskills, NY; 1960



Marcia: 1940s



Howard, Marcia, Morris, Linda



Kenneth & Marcia:



Leon, Kenny, Aaron: 1960



Marcia & Joe: Nevele Hotel, 1949





Marcia, Roz, Ida,  
Kenny, Aaron:  
Brighton Beach,  
Bay 5; 1959



Roz, Marcia, & Kenny: 1956



Leah, Linda, Marcia, Howard:  
Catskills, NY



Marcia, Ida, Kenny, Aaron:  
Brooklyn, 1960

Jason, Jerry,  
Rubin, Leon, Patti,  
Aaron, Jerry,  
Gloria, Dina, Joe,  
Philip, Arlene  
Front: Eric, Roz,  
Ida, Debbie,  
Leah, Neal,  
Yale, Marcia,  
Linda







Dina's mom Esther Lipchin,  
with her grandmother; 1900s.  
Esther's mom died  
during childbirth.

Gloria & Jerry  
Stulberger; 1980



Dina & Joe Kazlow:



Joe K.:  
1940s



Esther & Hirsh Magids; Bob, Sarah, Dina.  
Eschwege Germany DP camp: 1946



Dina, Gloria, Philip, Joe K.:



Michelle, Jerry, Gloria, Evan, Roz, Jerry  
David, Joe, Dina, Ida, Rubin, Marcia, Mara





Aaron, Jerry, Joe, Philip, Rubin, Morris, Patti, Leon  
Front: Phyllis, Arlene, Roz, Gloria, Dina, Leah, Ida, Linda, Marcia



Philip at  
WesternWall:  
Jerusalem: 1968



Philip & Leah  
wedding,  
1990:  
Howard A.,  
Karen,  
Aaron,  
Yale,  
Philip & Leah,  
David, Roz,  
Jerry, Rubin.  
Linda, Marcia,  
Ida, Michelle,  
Mara with  
Dina & Joe



Philip, Gloria, Dina, Joe: 1977



Leon, Linda Cohen, Roz: 1949.  
First coats in U.S., presents from Joe K.





Morris,  
Kenny,  
Marcia,  
Dina,  
Roz,  
Joe,  
Leon  
Phyllis,  
Ida  
Rubin.  
front:  
Aaron,  
Leah,  
Chaim,  
Philip  
1956



Bernie, Bernice, Freddie K., Rubin  
Gloria K, Tante Jennie at 99 yrs., Ida.



Freddie, Irving, Morris, Ida Seltzer: 1954



Sonia & Joe, 1980s



Sonia: 1930s



Sonia & Sidney Starkman: 1999





Sonia, Rubin, Marcia, Ida: 1996



Emily (Sonia's granddaughter), Ida, Rubin, Marcia, Joe & Sonia: 1997



Littman family:  
Rebecca, Rose, Bruce,  
Emily, Rachel



Ida, Rubin,  
Sonia: 1980



Sidney & Rose.  
Left: in England, 1950s.  
Top: in U.S.



Joe, Sonia,  
Rachel, Rebecca, Emily





Malka, Neche, Chaya, Michael Petrechowicz:  
Cyprus detention camps, 1940s



Bezalel & Nurit Y.: 1991



Chaya and Noah Yudovich



Moshe Bulkostein (Dolev) Bar Mitzvah  
Grandparents Neche & Michael P.: 1958





Nurit, Malka Y., Bezalel & Zahava (bride),  
Neché, Aharon, Michael, Moshe Y.

sisters: Chanah Leah & Neche



Bezalel, Noah Y., Joseph & Malka B., Unidentified  
Aharon Y., Moshe & Motte D., Nurit Y., Neche & Michael P.: 1958





Noah Y., Dina & Joe, Joseph B.; Ida, Michael P., Motte & Moshe D.,  
Nurit, Aharon, Aaron, Neche, Leah, Bezalel: Kiryat Ono, 1966



Chaya, Ida, Rubin: Israel, near Lebanon border



Rina, Patti, Leon: Ramat Gan, 1987



Ida, Nurit, Marcia, Rubin, Chaya, Malka, Marcia



Leon & Bezalel: 1987

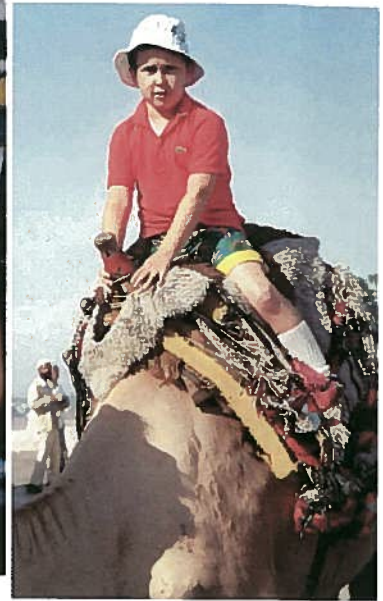


Noah Y., Joseph B.,  
Joe K., Bezalel Y.,  
Rubin, Ida, Michael P.,  
Chaya Y., Moshe D.,  
Neche, Aharon Y.,  
Malka B., Motte D.,  
Leah, Dina K.





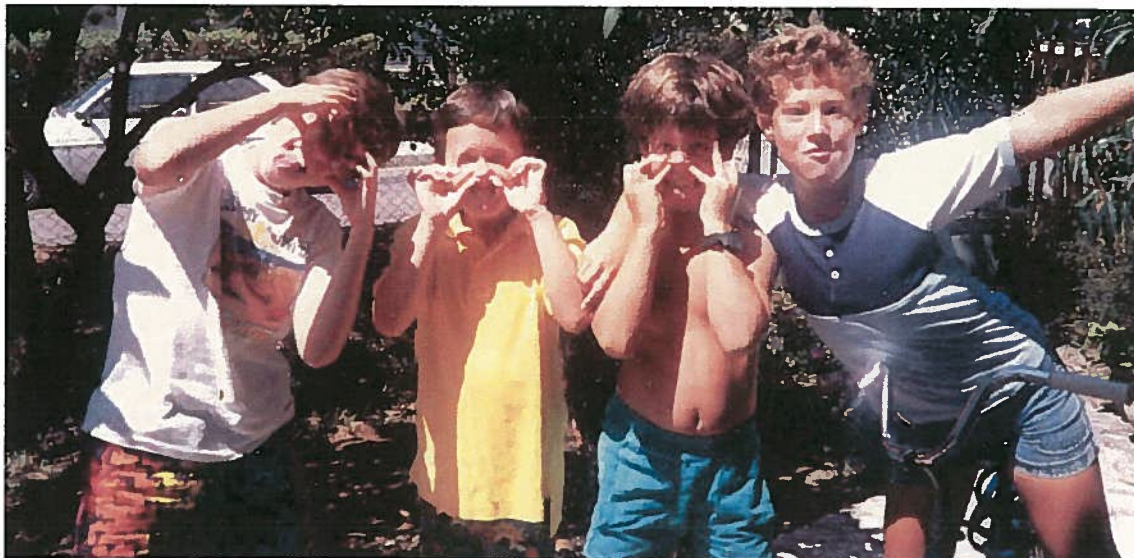
Asaf, Neal, Dror, Elad: 1987



Danny & camel: 1987



Bezalel, Zehava, Nir, Noah, Chaya, Malka, Patti, Joseph: 1987



Neal, Danny, Nir, Asaf





Dror, Bezalel, Asaf, Nir, Zahava: 1987



Debbie & Dror:  
1987



Yudovich front yard, typical evening:  
Kiryat Ono, 1987



Nurit & Leon: NJ



Chaya's porch, 1987:  
Bezalel, Aharon, Chaya, Orly, Malka





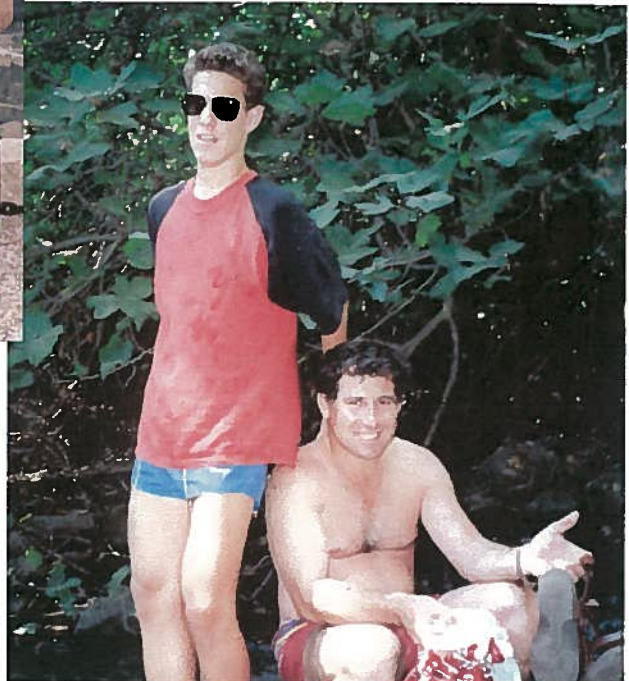
Noah, Ida, Rubin, Chaya: Israel



Natan & Leah Eckstein with Rubin & Ida



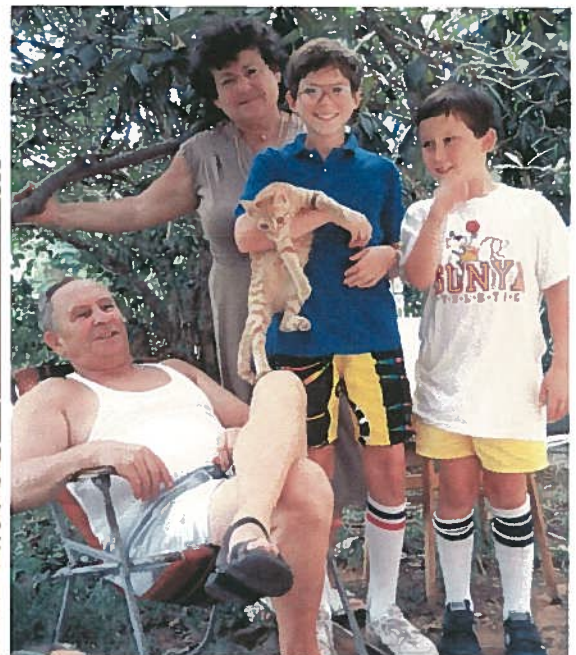
Danny, Asaf, Neal, Nir: Tel Aviv beach, 1987



Asaf & Bezalel



Joseph, Ida, Malka, Motte & Adina Dolev;  
Michal, Yarra, Eraan, Tal



Noah, Chaya, Neal, cat, Danny  
in Yudovich front yard: 1987





Ida & Rubin with Israel & Miriam Bloch (Rubin's cousin): Hadera



Ida, Marcia, Natan & Leah Eckstein



Zehava, Bezalel, Patti, Leon, Ahuva: NJ, 1999



Yoav & Ricky Eckstein, Karen & Aaron: ~2001



Elad, Nir, Danny: 1987



Noah, Ida, Rubin, Joseph, Malka, Chaya,



Patti, Darren, Nurit: 1997





Neal & camel: 1987



Karen, Yoav, Natan (hidden), Roey, Lea Eckstein, Dahlia, Debbie, Danny, Patti, Neal: Ramat Gan, 1987



Eli Kalev, Patti, Debbie, Rina K. & Avner, Tova '(Saragutka', Rubin's cousin), Neal & Danny: 1987



Asaf: Rosh Hanikra



Nurit & Darren: NYC, 1997



Tova-Saragutka, Rubin & Ida, Israel (Tova's sister) & Miriam Bloch, Marcia; Front- Leyat & Rina Kalev:



Ida & Rubin honored at Leyat Kalev's Bar Mitzvah; Rina & Eli: Ramat Gan





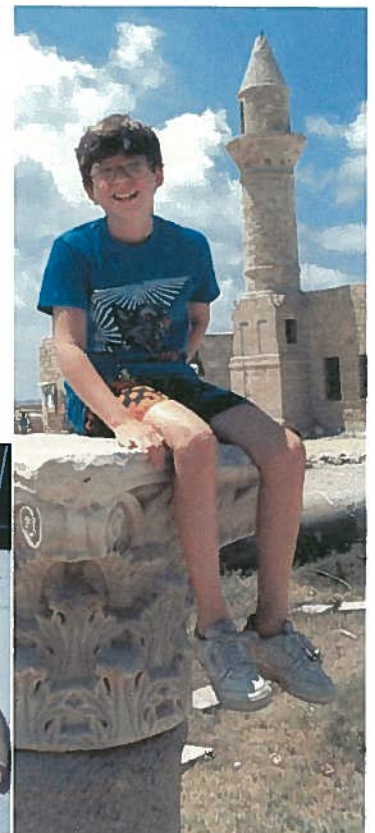
Leon, David, Neal, Ida, Rubin, Joseph B.  
Debbie, Marcia, Malka: NJ, 1976



Leon & Danny: Jerusalem, 1991



picnic, 1987: Nir, Zehava, Debbie, Patti, Leon, Asaf



Neal: Caeseria, 1987



Chaya, Joseph, Malka, Noah, grandchildren



## EPILOGUE – MARCH 13, 2021 UPDATE

THE AMAZING STORY OF RUBIN AND IDA SEGAL 1<sup>st</sup> Ed 2003. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2021

– [K.] denotes Kozlowski, Kazlow, etc. Sections include photos and commentary

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- **Introduction to Epilogue** 188
- **Milestones: births, deaths, marriages, news** 189
- **Ivye & Ivenetz – modern times** 194

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**Acknowledgements: Thanks to contributions** by many of our *mishpacha*, including among others:

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Rosaline [Segal] Nogin / Eisenstadt; Arlene[K.] Feldman; Rina Kalev; Ira Kazlow; Gary Kazlow; Philip Kazlow;  
Ellen [Zeltzer] Levine; Rose [Starkman] Littman; Irene Faith [Polonsky] Resnick; Irene [K.] Markus;  
Aaron & Karen Segal; Sidney Starkman; Gloria, Mara, Michelle [K.] Stulberger; Nurit Yudovich

This book is downloadable as a PDF at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website

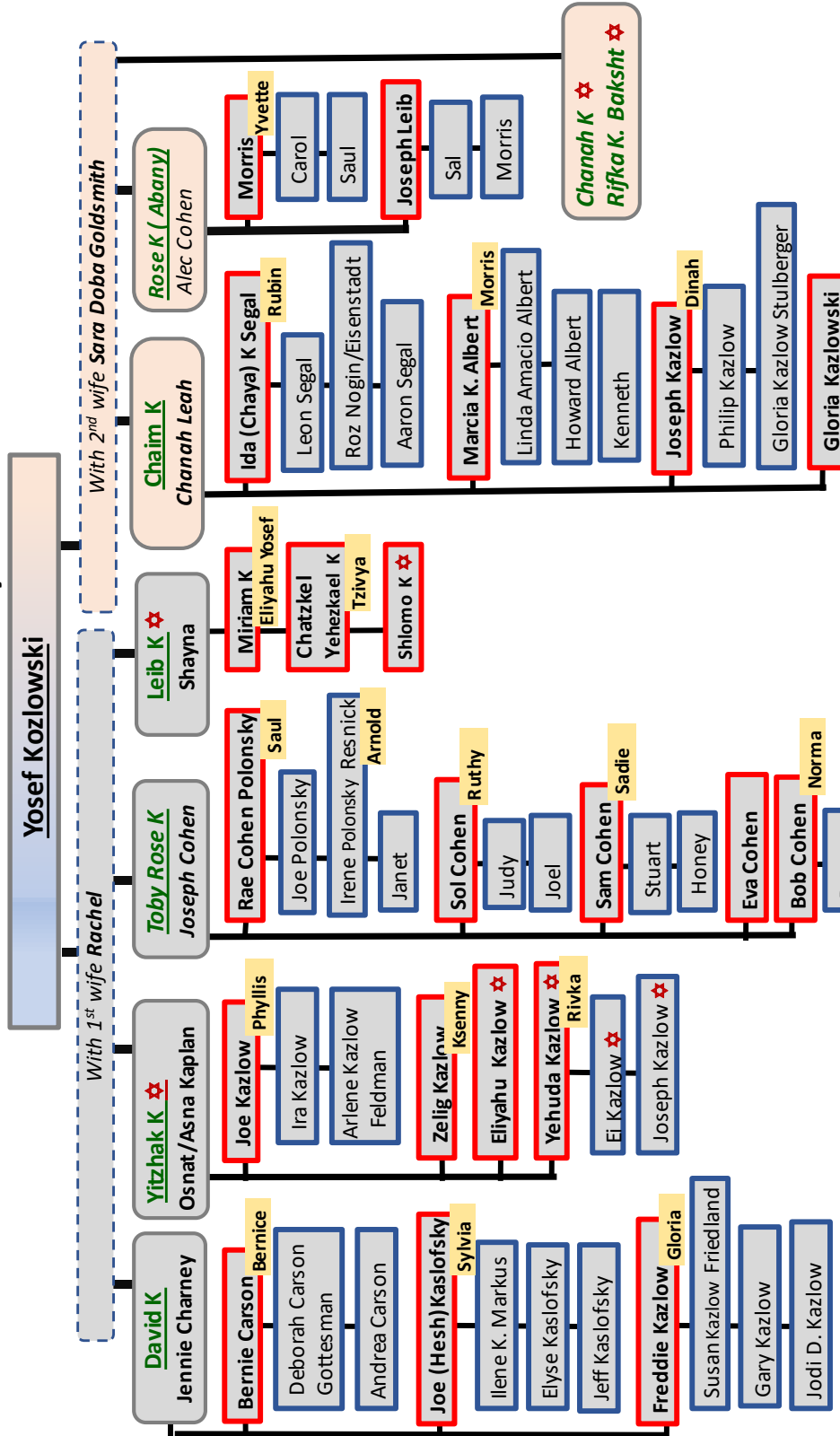
<https://collections.ushmm.org> -Enter/search Tears of a Hero. The PDF is printable double-sided.

Also see *Oral Histories at USHMM*

- Rubin Segal at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn509205>
- Ida Segal at <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn509204>



# Kazlowski Cousins Family Tree



- Includes only up to Yosef's Great-grandchildren
- Chaim K. had a twin brother who died at birth

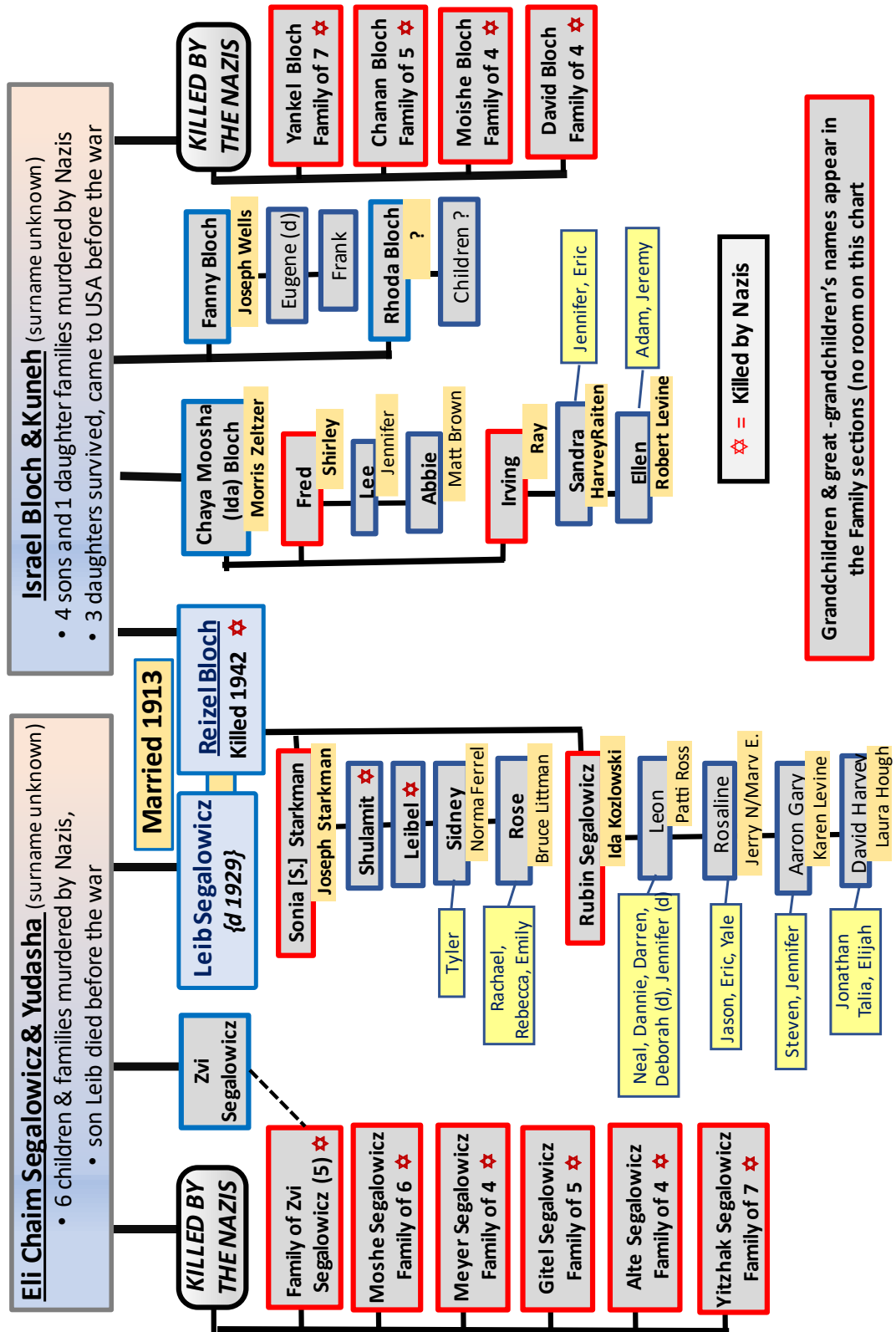
☆ = Killed by Nazis =   Yosef's grandchildren  
 Green = Yosef's children =   Yosef's great-grandchildren

The other part of the Kozlowski family tree is the Channah Leah Lipchin (Bubba Leah) part

## Cousins Family Tree (Kazlow/Kozlowski Family)



## Segalowicz Cousins Family Tree





## Introduction to Epilogue

Ida Segal's lifelong wish was that the story of what they lived through in the Holocaust, would not be forgotten – at least not by our family. While some relatives did not, or could not, talk about their experiences, Ida and Rubin felt that the world must know and understand what happened. She knew that some in our family had only vague memories of distant 'relatives surviving the Holocaust', or perishing, or of our family fighting Nazis as partisan fighters.

This epilogue is an update to the 2003 first edition and includes new material, photos, names/people, reminiscences, and events that have transpired, were recollected, or found.

Composing this story is complicated because we have many family members with the same first and/or last name (Kazlow; Cohen; so many Joe's). To clarify relationships, see the two new Kozlowski and Segalowicz '**Cousins Family trees**', focusing on 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins families. This adds onto the 2-page Kozlowski+Segal family tree diagrams in the first edition. (There is not enough space to include further generations, which may be described in the text.)

There is new material on our patriarchs, matriarchs, and their admirable children.

➤ **Yosef Kozlowski, had 9 children\*** born with 2 wives, shown on the Yosef K. Cousins Family Tree. New sections include those on families of his children and descendants:

- **Uncle Dave** and aunt Jennie Kazlowski
- **Joseph Kazlow** (Joe-the-Baker, Ira Kazlow's father)
- **Toby (Taibele) Rose [Kazlowski] Cohen**, including the Polonsky, Resnick, & Cohen families
- **Rose [Kazlowski/Katz] Cohen**, 'Aunt Rose from Albany'
- **Leib Kazlowski's** daughter Miriam Galinkin

**\*Of the 9 children\* born to Yosef, an amazing 8 (for that time) 8 lived.**

\*Chaim had a twin brother who died at birth. There are no updates for Yosef's unmarried daughters who died in the Holocaust: Channah and Rifka.

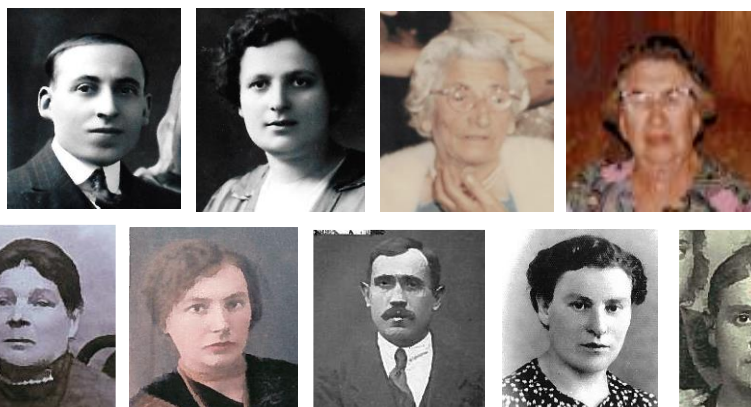
➤ **Eli Chaim Segalowicz and wife Yudasha had 7 children**, of which 5 were killed.

➤ **Israel Bloch and wife Kuneh had 7 children**, of which 4 were killed.

The epilogue update also include:

- Experiences of Sonia (Rubin's sister) & Joseph Starkman family
- The family of Rubin's maternal aunt Ida Zeltzer
- Relatives in Israel

### A Few of our Parents, Grandparent, Aunts, Uncles



**Top: David K., Jennie K., Toby Rose K., Rose K.  
Kuneh Bloch, Reizel Segalowicz, Chaim K., Chanah Leah [Lipchin] K., Neche Lipchin (Leah's sister)**



### **Milestones: births, deaths, marriages, new**

The last 17 years have seen the deaths of most of our aging and beloved relatives, our heroes. Ida lived to the age of 93, and Rubin died a few month short of age 98. Marcia and Joe Kazlow had both died earlier. For most of these survivors, their lives in the U.S. were largely pleasant, a wonder vs the daily expectations of death during their young years. Some suffered from depression, nightmares, nervousness, or hid it well – Their children know. In some cases, the final years were marked by undeserved physical and mental declines and distress. Of ‘that generation’, the living relatives as of 2021 include Joe Kazlow’s wife Dinah and Ida’s cousin in Israel Chaya Yudovich. Dinah and Chaya are doing remarkably well. Ida’s oldest friend, Chaya Chodosz is also doing well.

Milestones, commentary, and new developments included:

- Rubin’s only surviving sister Sonia (Sofia) Starkman died July 14, 2004. Joe Starkman died March 2, 2016. Their headstone is next to that of Ida and Rubin.
- Rosaline’s husband Jerry Nogin died on October 6, 2003, after a short and unexpected illness. He died surrounded by his family.
- Roz married Marvin Eisenstadt on 12.9.2009. Roz and Marv’s families had lived not far from each other—their children knew each other! Marv owns the Cumberland Packing Co. (Sweet’N Low), and their striking beach-front home is in Neponsit NY. Marv had a special connection with Rubin & Ida, they spoke every day.

The Nogin family is now scattered. Jason & Bonnie live in Callicoon center NY, with children Susie, Jillian, and Harrison. Eric’s lives with sons Matthew and Samuel in Kingston PA. Yale & Michelle live in Dunwoody GA, with their 4 children: Eliana Winter, Jonah Martin, Sarah Rebecca, Lila Rachel. Roz and Marvin travel all over the world. Roz’s hobbies include reading, knitting, needlepoint, walking, and travel with Marv.

- In October 2012 hurricane Sandy hit Roz’s and Rubin’s homes hard—their homes were near each other in Belle Harbor and Neponsit Beach. Winds reached 115 mph, with 100’ waves, and millions of people lost power for weeks. Roz’s entire 1<sup>st</sup> floor was washed away in a wall of water. Roz and Marv had hurried to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor just in time. Roz’s home had to be totally renovated which took 2 ½ years, complete with sea wall.
- Ida and Rubin were evacuated from their Beach 131<sup>st</sup> Street home by a small boat, to a neighbor’s house. Their home was restored, but they soon moved to a small apartment.
- On June 11, 2015 Ida Segal passed away in their apartment after several years of declining health. In her last years Ida suffered loss of hearing, eyesight, and strength, as well as mental decline. During those years, Ida had amazingly recovered well from several near-death illnesses, demonstrating the resilience that she showed her entire life. Until almost the end, Ida still had occasional good days. Ida was looking forward to the birth of twin great-grand-children, Desiree & Dylan. One of Ida’s hobbies during later years was reading and re-reading this family story, using a magnifying glass.

Altogether, Ida and Rubin had 4 children, 11 grandchildren (+ 2 deceased), and 14 great-grandchildren.

**When Ida died, she had known Rubin for 83 years, and they were married for 73 years, sharing an enviable, enduring bond and everlasting devotion.**



- Rubin's mental health and will started to deteriorate after Ida's death. He had several fitful years before his death. In addition to continual longing for Ida, his mobility became limited as his knees weakened, which upset him greatly – his physical strength had been impressive. Rubin became unable to live alone, and needed near-continual assistance.

Rubin's devotion to his '*goldene Chayala*' was immense, and by the end he only 'wanted to join his Chayala'. Still, he had many lucid days when he talked about family, the war, life, Israel, and politics. Rubin passed away on Friday 3.16.2018 in his room at the New Nautilus Hotel in Atlantic Beach NY, with grandson Jason at his side. Leon had seen Rubin the previous Wednesday, and they both knew the end was near.

A favorite saying and truism of Rubin's had become "It is what it is." That is so true!

- Aaron Segal joined Temple University's School of Dentistry 2015, after 31 years at Stony Brook University and private practice. Aaron became Chairman of Temple's Dept. of Restorative Dentistry in 2019. Aaron and Karen live near Philadelphia. Jennifer & Steven Mannasse were married on Aug. 21, 2016, and live in Bedford Hills NY. Son Steven Segal lives in E. Northport, NY. Steven works at Touro College. Jennifer teaches social studies.
- Leon Segal retired from Rutgers University in 2020, after 12 years as technology Licensing Director and over 50 years of work in that field, all around the world. Leon and Patti live in Monroe Twp. NJ, not far from Danny, Rachel, and twins Desi and Dylan in Freehold. Patti grows over 100 plants in her indoor and outdoor gardens, and likes to bake and cook, and teach the grandkids—who have already asked that Patti bequeath her recipes to them. Leon's hobbies include woodworking, gardening, and racquetball, and shares a tropical fish hobby with sons Danny and Darren.
- Danny (named after uncle Dave) and Rachel's twins were born on May 20 - Danny's birthday. Ida never got to see the twins as they were in the hospital ICU for a few weeks after birth. Ida had been so looking forward to seeing them. Danny works in the pharmaceutical industry. Rachel is a graphic designer – and full-time twins manager.
- Neal & Sammy, with children Deborah (named after Deborah, named after uncle Dave), Emma, and Mason, live in Mt. Pleasant, SC, and regularly come to NJ. The extended summer and winter trips are a family highlight. In 2020, the Covid-19 virus pandemic disrupted travel, and Debbie and Emma had near-virtual Bat Mitzvoths, complete with masks. Sammy teaches in S. Carolina, and is pursuing advanced degrees. Neal works in health insurance and procurement for mining and transportation industries.
- Youngest son Darren Ari, named after Deborah Amy (named after Uncle Dave) was Bar Mitzvahed at the MJCC, and also at Masada in Israel, as his brothers and sister had been. Darren became engaged to Kristy Stanislawczyk in December 2020. Darren obtained a degree in Environmental Science. He now works as software engineer and web developer. Kristy is an assistant district attorney in NYC. They met at SUNY Albany.
- By 2007, David Segal was having marriage and personal issues. For unexplainable reasons, David decided to abandon his parents, his family, and his faith. David moved to Iowa, and practiced neurosurgery there before he apparently stopped in 2015. He seems to have become a lawyer, in California. David has 3 children – Jonathan, Talia, and Elijah. David dropped contact with the family, a tragedy that deeply devastated Rubin and Ida for the remainder of their lives.



- Joe Kazlow (Ira & Arlene's dad) died Jan. 15, 2013. Phyllis had died June 8, 2006. Arlene wrote: "My parents (*alechem hashalom*) were blessed with 6 grandchildren and would have had 8 great grandchildren. Drs. Abby & Dr. Daniel Basalely - 4 children; Michael & Rebecca Feldman - 3 children including twin boys. Dr. Emily & Ron Hirschhorn have a baby girl. Abby and Emily both work at LIJ Northwell Health. Emily has a Ph.D. in psychology and is a child psychologist at Zucker Hillside Hospital. Abby is a pediatric nephrologist at Cohen Children's Medical Center. Ira and Arlene are both practicing lawyers.  
Ira and Linda have 3 children David, Miriam, and Jonathan. Ira researched and documented his dad's emigration to the US, an interesting story.
- Marcia Albert died Nov. 26, 2014, at age 87 - a gentle, sweet, caring person with total devotion to her family. Marcia's last years were difficult, suffering mental decline. Daughter Linda cared for her until the end. Marcia's granddaughter Lauren married Devin Tanchum on June 21, 2009, and have a daughter Tigerlily (Tigey), born Feb. 7, 2017. Marcia's grandson Michael works as an audio specialist, and married Veronica Santiago in 2020. Marcia's son Howard died on Feb. 4, 2021 of colon cancer, an untimely death.
- Rubin's niece and nephew, Rose [Starkman] Littman and Sidney Starkman were Rubin's only niece/nephew, as only his sister Sonia survived the war with him. Joseph Starkman received recognition for his war-time heroics in the partisans by way of medals awarded by Russia, the same as had Rubin. Sidney practices medicine at UCLA. Rose had a career as a teacher and then at the R.W. Johnson Foundation. Sidney has a son Tyler. Rose has 4 grandchildren from her 3 daughters - Rachael, Rebecca, Emily. Rachael is an acclaimed *chazzan* (cantor), singing in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish.
- The *Ivenetz-Ivye* Memorial Society ended its annual gatherings soon after Rubin's death. The meetings were held on the Yahrzeit of the Ivye executions of its Jews, with a Yizkor memorial service. By the time of Rubin's death, there were few survivors to carry this on, and most were too old to travel to meetings. The younger generation did not have sufficient interest to continue this tradition. During some of the meetings, descendants who had visited Ivye or Ivenetz brought photos of the villages. They were interesting but not thrilling or memorable. Neither Rubin nor Ida ever expressed a desire to revisit those *shtetls*, which had more tragic than good memories. As for Mishukovitz, Ida's *dorf*, there was never anything much there, and there is still not.
- The only surviving uncle of Sonia and Rubin was Zvi Segalowicz. He survived, but his wife and children were killed by the Nazis. Uncle Zvi went to Israel on the famous ship Exodus. In Israel, he met and married a wonderful French Holocaust survivor named Chava. She had one daughter who was an Israeli clothes designer and dressmaker. Rosaline spent a lot of time with them on her first trip to Israel.

**Too many of our parents' generation have died to list here.**

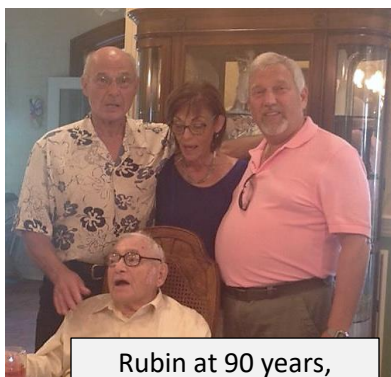
**יהי זכרנם לברכה**

***Zikhronam livrakha***

**May Their Memories Be a Blessing**



## Photos – Collage



Rubin at 90 years,  
Leon, Roz, Aaron



Rubin with **DAILY** Teffilin

Leon & Roz. New Years Card. Austria or Italy



Leon & Roz,  
in DP camp. 1948



Many years ago



tante Jennie, bubbe Chanah Leah,  
aunt Rose



Roz & Patti. 1969  
1351 E. 10 St., B'klyn



Years ago. Marcia & Ida



Years ago.  
Philip & Gloria Kazlow



Holidays & birthdays



### Marriage? The Bloch Family, Ivye, circa 1935.

Kuneh Bloch is 2<sup>nd</sup> from right, mid-row.

#### Kuneh is the mother of

- Reyzel [Bloch] Segalowicz (mom to Rubin Segal & Sonia [Segalowicz] Starkman)
- Chaya Moosha (Ida) [Bloch] Zeltzer (mom to Irving & Fred Zelzer)
- Kuneh had a total of 8 living children, and 4 who died in youth. Four of her children's families were killed by the Nazis.

-Photo from Ellen Levine's archival collection





Phyllis & Joe-the-Baker wedding. With uncle Chaim & aunt Leah



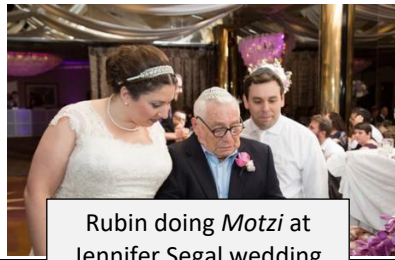
Bernie Carson with his Aunt Rose (from Albany) on left, with niece Ilene Markus on right, 2013



1913. Rose Katz (Kazlowski) In Europe. Husband-to-be Alec Cohen chased her to USA



Rubin's Medals from Russia for partisan activities



Rubin doing *Motzi* at Jennifer Segal wedding



Uncle Dave, Tante Jennie with nephew Joe-the-Baker, Marcia [K.] & Morris Albert



Toby Rose Cohen



Avraham & Edith Zeltzer with son Morris, Ida, children Irving & Fred



Gloria & brother Joe K



Gloria, Joe, *bubbe* Leah, *zeyde* Chaim, Aunt Rose from Albany, Joe (the Baker), Uncle Dave, Tante Jennie



1937. Tante Jennie, Uncle Dave, sons Bernie, Fred, Joey



Shabbos candles. Samantha, Rachel, Patti Segal



### Ivye & Ivenetz – Modern Times

- More information is now available online for Ivye and Ivenetz than there was in 2003, including historic photos and tourist information. A Belarus excursion site lists 3 Ivye attractions: a monastery, mosque, and church. The memorial to the 2,524 Jews killed in 1942 is not listed as an attraction. This memorial can be seen at various websites, such as <https://www.consumermojo.com/remembering-those-killed-in-ivye-in-1942/> .
- The first modern Bat Mitzvah was held in Ivye in 2019, in a museum (as there is no *schul*) see <https://wupj.org/news/2019/09/15088/belarus-first-bat-mitzvah-in-ivye/> .
- This 2015 news article in the Minsk Herald describes Christians, Muslims, and Jews living peacefully in Ivye, and the monument shown below: <https://minskherald.com/2015/10/christians-muslims-and-jews-can-live-peacefully-side-by-side-a-report-from-ivye-a-multi-religious-town/>
- By 2009 restoration to the remaining wooden synagogue in Ivenetz was initiated by the Jewish Heritage Research Group in Minsk, Belarus, <http://www.jhrgbelarus.org/>. This group may have a Facebook page. See photos below. The Jewish cemetery is not maintained. There is much less information available for Ivenetz. The main attraction is the baroque cathedral. Modern photos of these 2 shtetls are shown.



Ivye. Former schul, at 11 Pervomaiskaia St. Former synagogue complex, 2011 (not used).



Ivye. Memorial to harmony of 4 religions 2012      Memorial to mass grave in the Staniovichy forest  
The memorial stone reads: "800 Jews from Ivenets, Derevna, Glubokoye, Rubezhevichi, Volma and Kamen were murdered by the Nazis on June 9, 1942." (Note - other sources state 1,025 killed))

Ivye (Ivye) to Mishukovichy, 10 km (6 miles). Ivye is in Belarus (Byelorussia). 'Byelo' or belo = white. There may be several reasons the Belarus region is called White Russia.

- This is the one part of Rus never settled by the Mongols after 1240 conquest
- This region was Christian while other regions remained pagan
- The Russian civil war of 1917-1922 pitted the Reds (Communists) vs the Whites





Ivenetz Jewish cemetery



Ivenetz wood synagogue, over 100 years old



Ivenetz town center circa 2020



Ivye, family photo 1916, Church remains



Salerno Italy. ~1948. Chain, Gloria, Leah, Rubin, Ida. Leon & Roz.

Description on back of photo said 'US Army barracks, Salerno'. US army barracks and POW camps were used as DP camps.



**Russian Medals: "For Partisan actions".** March 4<sup>th</sup> 2009, on 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in the **Great Patriotic War 1941-1945.**

Presented by the Russian Consul in Israel 'Stegnii' B.

Russia did not call WWII by that name. **In Russia, WWII is called the Great Patriotic War.**

The (initial) Patriotic War denoted Russia's war against the 1812 invasion by Napoleon. In WWII, while Russia fought on some lesser fronts, its major conflict with Nazi Germany was on the WWII Eastern Front. This was its Great Patriotic War.

The name was intended to motivate the population to defend the Soviet fatherland and to expel the invader, and the reference to the Patriotic War of 1812 was seen as a great morale booster inside Russia, where patriotism has always been high.

- These medals are in addition to others received at war's end. Joseph Starkman and Peter Chodosz received similar awards and medals.

Peter Chodosz felt that the medals would have been of a higher order and given earlier to non-Jews.



### Why are there no photos of Rubin & Ida in the partisans?

Some may be surprised to learn that there are no photos of Rubin or Ida in partisan uniforms or in wartime settings. Many photos were taken, but we do not have any, as no photos were brought out of Europe by any of our family heading to Israel. Pics from pre-war Europe were obtained later from family in Israel or in US. There is one famous photo of Ida's young brother Joseph in the Bielski partisans (below). This photo appears in books, internet, and movies ('Defiance') about this famous Jewish Partisan brigade.

**No one in the family, heading to Israel, brought photos out of Europe.** After the war many survivors were set on going to ארץ ישראל, Israel – which did not yet exist. This was an illegal journey, as Britain controlled the Palestine mandate and immigration. If anyone had photos identifying them as Polish/Russian, partisan or not, they would have been repatriated to those abysmal countries, facing the army draft, likely death, and certain continued persecution by anti-Semites, or even their 'neighbors'. The *Bricha* (the underground group bringing Holocaust survivors to Israel) made refugees destroy all photos, mementos, documents, letters, even clothing that might show Polish or Russian connections. The family walked across Europe posing as Greeks, which had a more liberal policy: You could leave Greece, but had to give up all possessions. The family learned to speak some Greek!!



**Joseph K., Marcia K., Ida & Rubin Segalowicz in Poland after the war.**

**The clothes are NOT military uniforms, but made by Ida from uniforms.**

Maybe the military-like styles were meant to appear more imposing to the local populace.

The famous photo below shows a group of Bielski partisans guarding their airstrip, used to ferry men and supplies. It was taken near war's end, after Joe, the Kozlowski's, and the Segalowicz family joined this Jewish family brigade. Joe (arrow) identified himself to me in this photo in a very humble way "I am in that photo". Joe was under 20 years old (1945). Note the many types of clothing. Most partisans did not have uniforms, possibly excluding the Russian-supported partisans.



**Joe [K.] is wearing 2 bandolier ammunition or gun belts**



THE KOZLOWSKI / SEGAL FAMILIES

Aaron & Karen Segal Family



Jennifer, Karen, Steven



Rubin, Karen, Aaron  
At New Nautilus Hotel.

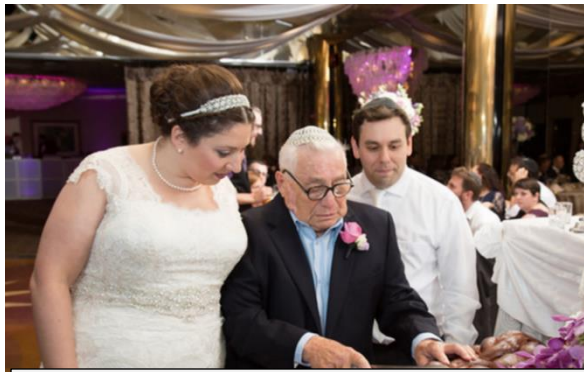


Karen, Rubin, Patti, Ida, Roz



Jennifer & Steven wedding. Aaron & Karen. Whole mishpachah





Jennifer & Steven wedding. Rubin doing *Motzi*, a family tradition for him



Karen, Aaron, Steven, Jennifer wedding



Mom & daughter chefs.  
Karen & Jen



The New Nautilus Hotel was on the beach in Long Beach, not far from Rosaline's home.

Rubin & Ida had stayed here earlier for holidays or vacations. After Ida's death, as Rubin needed continual care, and his children worked, he stayed here. Rubin made new friends, both residents & staff, attended the *Schul* daily, watched his friends play Bingo, and went on walks when possible. Rubin retained his sense of humor until the end.

The hotel had a pool, *schul*, kosher food of course, activities, access to boardwalk, doctor on the premises or on call, and decent food selections. We would take Rubin out to a local deli, or even Chinese, for a change of food, and sometimes joined him for family or holiday meals at the hotel.

The family wanted Rubin to have a suite with ocean-view balcony. Rubin insisted on a single room. Rubin often said in his last years: "Life is what it is."



**Leon & Patti Segal Family – Danny & Rachel; Neal & Samantha; Darren & Kristy**



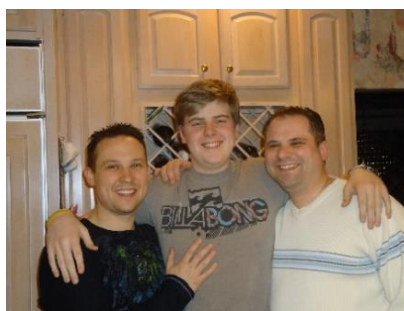
Sammy Rachel, Patti . Shabbos candles



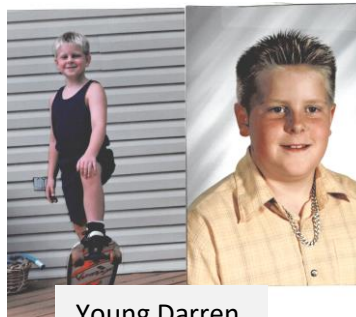
Sammy & Neal wedding cake



Emma, Mason, Sammi, Neal, Deb at Cape May NJ. 2020 Patti & Leon



Segal brothers



Young Darren





Patti & Leon & all grandchildren, 2015



Holocaust Memorial Torah dedicated to Debbie Segal at MJCC. Cabinet by Leon



Darren's Bar Mitzvah... MJCC



Yad made by Leon



Darren's Bar Mitzvah – Yad, pointer for Torah Reading  
— Rosewood, Israeli Olive Wood. Turquoise Yad  
Yad made by Leon



NJ Darren's Bar Mitzvah...



Rubin, Darren, Ida





Danny & Rachel wedding. The *mishpachah*



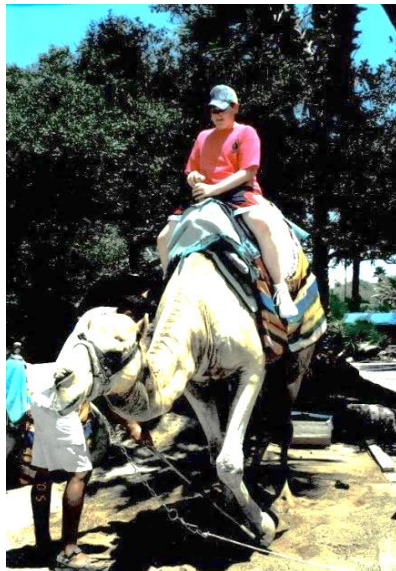
Danny & Rachel wedding



Few years later, Desi & Dylan



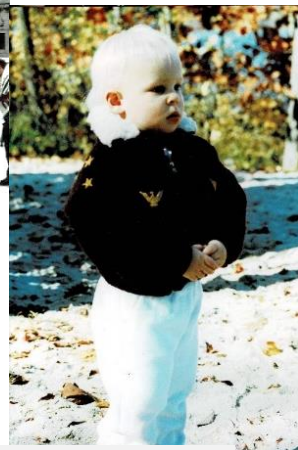
Rachel, Danny, grandparents



Darren Bar Mitzvah, Israel.



Tefillin at the Wall



Darren at Shongum Lake.  
Jacket by aunt Roz





Rubin with Dylan, Desi, Danny, Patti, Leon



Danny & Rachel



Dylan & Desi, 2021



Desi & Dylan, 2020



Darren & Kristy 2020



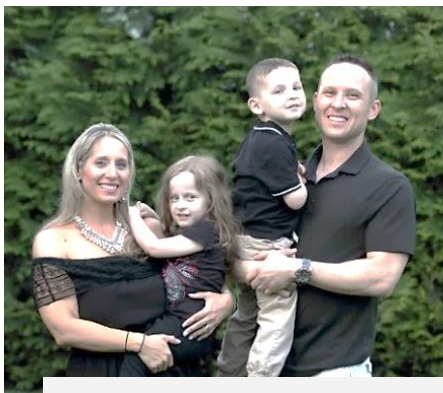
World travelers



Patti & Darren



2020 – Darren & Kristy  
SUNY Albany graduation



Rachel, Desi, Dylan, Danny

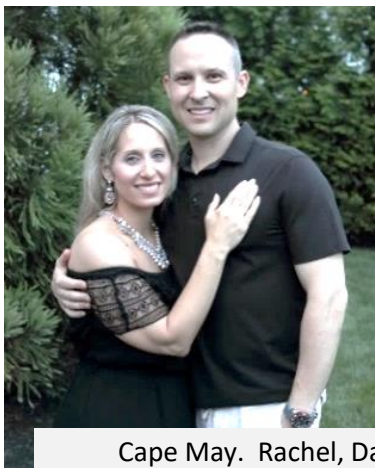


Cape May 2019  
Darren & Kristy



Sammi & Neal





Cape May. Rachel, Danny



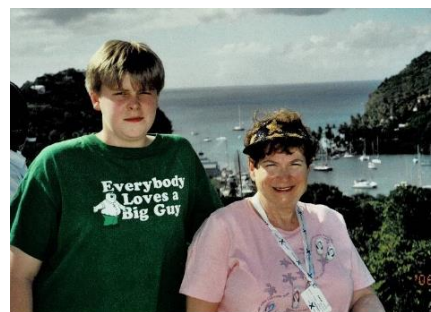
The Segal mishapchah



Rubin & Darren 2014. Mom was on sofa.  
Rubin said he was getting shorter.  
When asked how tall he was: "I am 4' tall now"



Darren & Patti  
SUNY graduation



Caribbean  
Rome



Cape May NJ 2019. Patti & Leon  
grandkids Mason, Dylan, Emma,  
Debbie, Desi

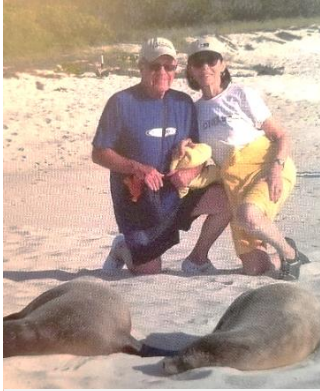


Debbie, Emma. And Mason Randolph NJ





**Rosaline [Segal] Eisenstadt Family**



Marv & Roz in Galapagos.



With Eric, Yale, Jason



Marv & Roz wedding



In Israel with Nurit, 2017



Thanksgiving 2016



The *mishpacha* at Roz & Marvin wedding 2009



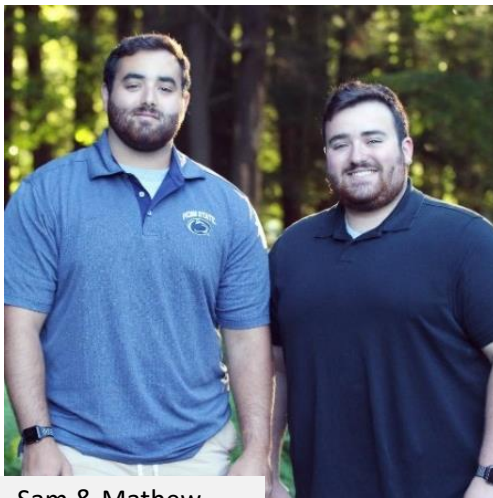
Michelle, Yale Negin family



Roz & Marv wedding



cruising



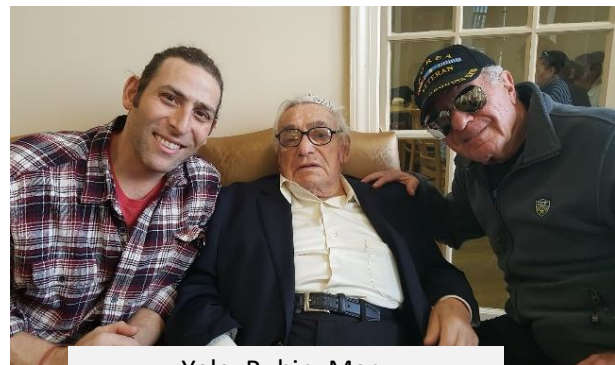
Sam & Mathew



Eric, Sam & Mathew and friends



Ida & Rubin with Michelle/Yale grandchildren



Yale, Rubin, Marv



Linda Albert Family – Marcia [K.] Albert was Linda's mom



Rubin with Devin, Linda, Michael, Lauren



Marcia, bubby Chanah Leah, Lauren, Linda



Tigerlily, Devin, Lauren



Michael Amacio & Verónica Santiago. 2020



Veronica & Michael 2020



Devin, Lauren, Tigey (Tigerlily), Linda ...Zoe (woof)



In Israel. Ida, Nurit, Rubin,  
cousins Chaya & Malka , Marcia



**Arlene [Kazlow] & Artie Feldman Family**



Phyllis & Joe Wedding.  
Top row center left: Morris, Joe K #1, Joe K #2, Rubin  
Front row: Roz, Leon, other Gloria, Phyllis



Arlene & Arthur Feldman



Abbey's wedding, Ira & Linda family



Dr. Abby & Daniel Basalely wedding party



Dr. Emily & Ron Hirschhorn  
6.2.2015



Dr. Abby & Dr. Daniel Basalely  
1.7.2008



Rebecca & Michael Feldman  
6.26.2011



## Grandchildren named 'Joseph, Phyllis' named after grandparents



Michael & Rebecca's boys. Left twin is 6-year Jordan Max (named after Art's dad) with brother Donny Joseph on right. Center is Adam Jacob, 1 year



Ellie Phyllis 8 years. Baby -Regina Rose 9 months. Oldest grandchild is Menashe Mordechai (Max) 11 years. Yosef (Joseph) age 5 on right. Passover 2020



Rayna at 1 year. Emily & Molly at Psy. D. graduation 2020



Rebecca & Michael family



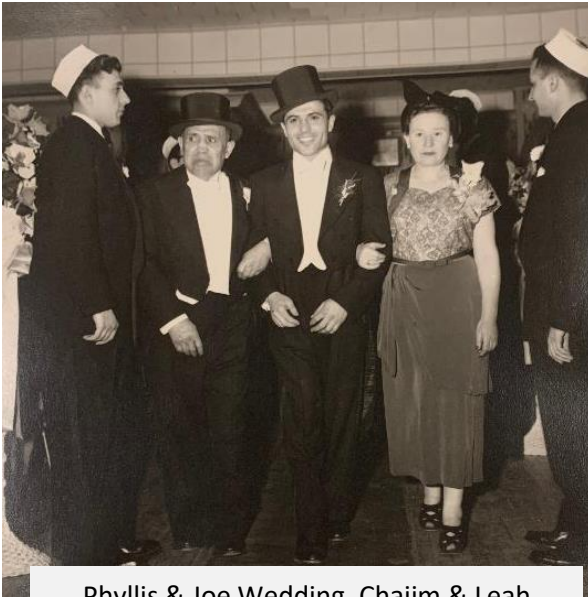
2019. Arlene, Art, family.  
Back: Ron & Emily Hirschhorn w/baby Molly. Abby holding Donny. Jordan, Rebecca, Michael, Adam



Arlene & Ira families.  
Back: Art, Daniel, Menashe, Michael, Emily, Ron, Ira, Arlene  
Front Linda, David, Donny Joseph, Abby, Yosef in lap, then Miriam, Jordan Max, Jonathan, Ellie Phyllis on Jonathan's lap.



## Ira & Linda Kazlow Family



Phyllis & Joe Wedding. Chaiim & Leah  
(Joe's aunt & uncle) walking Joe down aisle.



Phyllis & Joe Wedding.  
Chaiim & Leah From *schmatas* to tophats



Joe's brother Zelig  
Russia, early 1960's. Only picture



Cousin Bernice Carson with Phyllis & Joe



Joe 1947 Italy  
Suit made by Uncle Dave



1949. Joe, Roz & Leon. Brooklyn  
Admiring Joe's hair





2005. Joe teaching how to make *Hamanteschen* at Jonathan's nursery school



2004. Jonathan birthday



2002. Joe & Phyllis with grandkids. Older ones are Arlene's, younger one's Ira's



2005 Chanukah. with Ira's children



At Glen Oaks Bakery



Emily Bat Mitzvah Jan 1, 2004





2018. Ira & Jonathan graduation



2019. Jonathan & Miriam. Camp Morasha



Phyllis & Joe



2014. Long Beach, before  
Jonathan Bar Mitzvah



2018. Jonathan's HS graduation,  
with David & Miriam



2018. Jonathan, Abby, Michael ,Emily, Grandma  
Phyllis, Miriam. Grandpa Joe, David

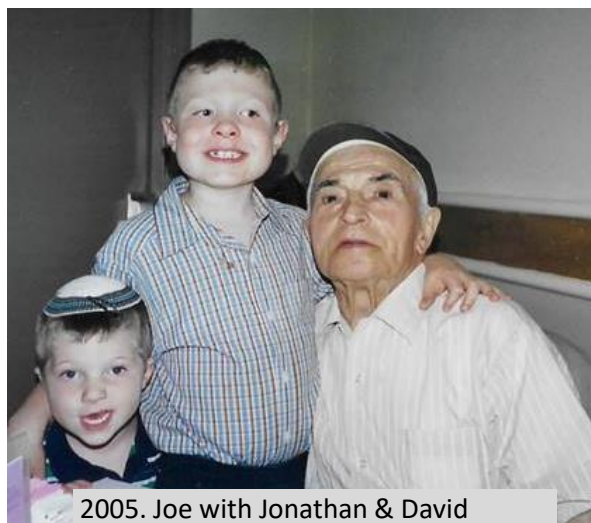




2005. David's birthday



2003 Miriam dance recital



2005. Joe with Jonathan & David



2004. Jonathan birthday



David, Miriam, Jonathan  
Ira, Phyllis, Joe



2004. with David, Miriam, Jonathan



### Dinah (and Joe) Kazlow Family

Dinah Kazlow is the last surviving American relative of Rubin & Ida's generation (2021). She is in decent health, travels to Florida during winters, to Aruba for vacations, and remains vibrant and devoted to her family, Judaism, and relatives.



Dinah with great grandchildren -  
Mati Friedman, Yaakov Yosef Friedman, Alexander Joseph (AJ) Stulberger, Eli Friedman, Sophie Stulberger



In Aruba with Gloria & Jerry



Dinah with Gloria, Jerry, Mara,  
Michelle at Western Wall



Bubba Leah & Philip  
graduation



Evan, Michelle, Mara



Chanukah Dec. 2019. Evan, AJ, Mara, Michelle,  
David, Gloria, Dinah, Jerry, Pumpkin (woof),  
Rebecca & Sophie

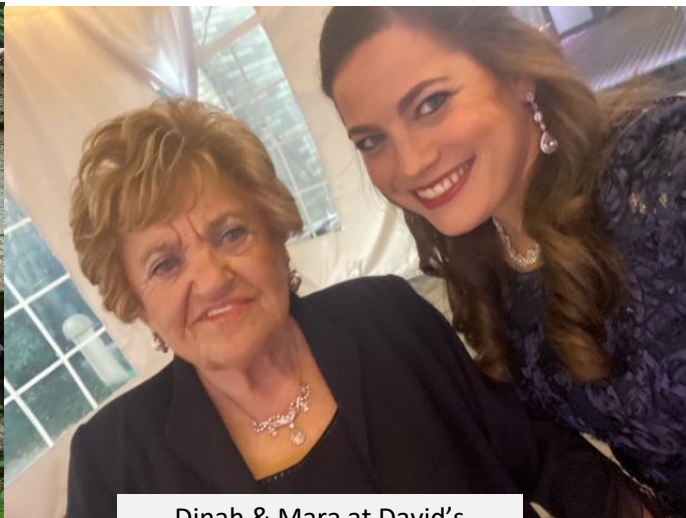


Gloria & Jerry Wedding.  
Philip. Dinah. Joe





Patti, Michelle, Mara – Aruba  
Touring after a rare, huge rainstorm



Dinah & Mara at David's  
wedding. Nov. 29, 2020



David S. & Silva Berger wedding Nov. 29, 2020



### The Starkman Family

Rubin's beloved sister Sonia (Sofia/Zofia) Starkman died on 7.14.2004, at the age of 89. Husband Joe died 12 years later, on 3.3.2016, at age 96. On the eve (*erev*) of every Jewish holidays such as *Rosh Hashonah*, Rubin phoned Sonia to wish her a happy and healthy holiday. When (I) asked why he phoned her, vs Sonia calling him, Rubin replied "She is my older sister, and I should phone her as sign of respect."

The USHMM archives contain the following for Joseph and Sonia [Segalowicz] Starkman:

- 2 Russian certificates for their service in the Belarus Partisans, 6.18.1942 to 7.20.1944
- 2 Russian certificates w/medals for fighting as partisans in the Great Patriotic War, 6.2.1944
- A "Deutsche Kennkarte" (identity documents) issued to Joseph and Sonja Starkman, issued in Passau, Germany, by Civilian Services attached to Polish Forces, dated 10.2.1951

### Contributed by Rose [Starkman] Littman (migration name Grinberg, Joseph's stepbrother)

My father Joseph was born in the *shtetl* of Bodzentyn, near Kelcz. In 1939 there were one thousand Jews in Bodzentyn, about 1/3 of the population. After the war, there were none. In 1937, at the age of 18, Joe left his home, his mother Rachael, 2 sisters, Frimah and Cheleh (Helen), and his other siblings. We assume left to flee persecution, and war was looming. He arrived in the *shtetl* of Ivenitz, where he rented a room in the home of Raizel (Rozalyn) Segalowicz. Here Joe met his future brother-in-law Rufkeh (Rubin) and his wife-to-be, Raizel's lively and attractive daughter, Zofia. Originally Joe thought Zofia was too young for him, but once he saw her "dressed up", he knew she was 'of marrying age'. So, in 1939, he married Zofia, and they continued living with Raizel. By the spring of 1941, they had an 18 month old son, Leibele {Leib = Leon}, named after Zofia's father, and a daughter, Shulamit, about 6 months old. On *Shavuoth* that year Nazis came to their home and forced Raizel to deliver my dad, who had been hiding in the cellar, as well as my mom. They were taken to a "work camp" or lager. {The Nazis often 'selected' Jews on Jewish holidays, when families gathered.} My grandmother, Raizel, and the 2 babies were not permitted to go. My parents never saw Sonia's mom, or their 2 children, again. Their loss haunted them their entire lives.

During the war, while my parents fought in the partisans, they tried to find out whether their children were possibly still alive. Eventually, they obtained a list of Nazi victims which confirmed their deaths. (The Nazis kept meticulous lists!) They also found out that grandma Raizel and both grandchildren had first been hidden in the attic of a "righteous" Gentile neighbor, but their location was divulged and they all were slaughtered. After the war, in 1945, my dad wanted to return to their homes to see who was still alive. However, his Russian "Kommandar", who had befriended my dad, told him that Jews who returned were being shot before they could even step off the train. The war was not over for Jews, nor for anti-Semitic Poles.

My dad had many unbelievable experiences during the war. In 1941, when my parents were in the Novogrudek work camp, my dad threatened the Judenrat's head that if he didn't hand over guns, Joe would tell the Nazis that it was the *Judenrat* who put him up to getting guns. My dad got the guns, which he likely needed to get into the partisans. So my dad and a group of Jewish men escaped the lager and joined the partisans. {Escape was sometimes quite possible, survival was the problem.} The women, including my mother, were left behind.

Soon after my dad's escape from the lager, my mom went to a lake to fill a pitcher with water. She saw that the nearby gate was open-- no Nazi guards. Outside the gate, there was only a woman pre-occupied with speaking to a nun. At that exact moment, my mom had to make a pivotal decision; one that would forever alter her life. Should she try to escape alone?



Should she go back and get her little sister Faygele? If she did, she could be taking her sister to face death. My mom decided to escape through the gate without going back for her sister. This incident became a “double edged sword” for my mom. For the rest of her life, she had tremendous guilt for saving herself and not taking her sister, and often mumbled to herself: “What else could I have done?” After her brave escape, she then travelled for 3 days looking for my father, through dismal forests and swamps, in rain and mud, with only a few crumbs of food. By a miracle, she found my astonished father, already in a partisan unit. My dad’s first words to her were “Sonia, how did you find me and what are you doing here?” Soon, my diminutive mom, standing a full 4’11” tall, became a partisan fighter, complete with a rifle (a “*bix*”) bigger than her. My mom and dad stayed together and fought Nazis and collaborators until the end of the war. My dad blew up enemy trains, and volunteered for the most dangerous missions, since the *Kommanants* were aware of his mindset. He had lost 2 children, and with nothing more to lose, may have wanted revenge.

My dad and Ruvkeh fought together, and saved each other’s lives on many occasions. In the incident in which Ruvkeh fell asleep while on guard duty, and faced death for this offense, it was my dad who strongly discouraged the commander from shooting Ruvkeh on the spot. The commander let Ruvkeh live, but he had to leave the group. Soon, my mom, dad, and Ruvkeh joined another partisan group. These were infested swamps they fought in, and one day my dad’s legs got infected from a swarm of insect bites. My mom bandaged the oozing, infected legs. My dad got up to go on the next mission, but he could barely walk. The partisan commander saw my dad’s bandaged legs, and did not let him go. It turned out that a traitor divulged the mission, and the entire group of men was killed.

On April 13, 1945 my brother Sidney was born in a Minsk DP camp. In 1946, while my parents and Sid were transferring between DP camps, my dad’s stepbrother, David Grinberg, notified the refugee agencies that he would sponsor our family to come to England. My dad’s sister, Frimeh Gitlis, also lived in London. To facilitate our entry to the UK, our last names were all listed as Grinberg, not Starkman. In a few years we headed to the USA, and we then changed the names back to Starkman.

I was born in London’s Middlesex Hospital on August 22, 1950. In 1951, my parents lived near Covent Gardens, in an apartment on a street that my mom pronounced as “Hersen”. My dad worked as a fireman, then in a doll factory, then as a butcher, but barely made a living. My mom missed her brother Ruvkeh, and they communicated often by mail, planning to come to the U.S. (Rufkeh and Ida showed our pictures to Leon and Rosaline, telling them that their cousins would be coming soon.) For unknown reasons, Ruvkeh could not sponsor our entry to the U.S. Ida Segal’s generous uncle Dave, and his wife tante Jenny did so, possibly because he could guarantee a job for my dad in the garment factory he worked in.

We came to the U.S. on the famous Cunard ship *Mauretania*, the largest and fastest ship at that time. We arrived in the U.S. on 12.6.1951. (Coincidentally, my daughter Rachael was born 26 years later, to the day.) Upon arrival, HIAS placed us in one of ‘their buildings’ in Manhattan. We then moved to an apartment in Brooklyn, not far from uncle Ruvkeh and aunt Chaikah, and the families saw each other often. In 1955, we moved to 182 Legion Street in Brownsville, which was then a nice area. We were walking distance to the large and newly renovated Lowes movie theater on Pitkin Avenue, where I saw my first movie in 1956, “The Ten Commandments” starring Charlton Heston. My dad became a carpet layer for the American Rug & Carpet Co., 105 Madison Avenue. In August, 1961 we moved to a very nice home in Sheepshead Bay, and my dad became his own boss. He worked hard, long hours, and his knees and knuckles were swollen



from this work (try using a 'Carpet Stretcher' tool). My dad worked until after the age of 70. I left for college in 1968, and frequently visited home.

In 1969, I met my husband Bruce Littman while we both attended George Washington U.. I got a BA in French & Elementary Education. In 1976, Bruce received a DMD from the NJ University of Medicine & Dentistry (now Rutgers), and he practiced until 2019. After I married Bruce in 1972, we briefly moved to Brussels, Belgium, then back to the US. Then we lived in NJ and in MD, before moving to our current home in Manalapan. I worked as a teacher, then for the Holtzbrinck Publishing Co., then went back to teaching in 2005. Finally, I worked in the job that I loved at the Research/Evaluation Dept. for RWJF, Princeton, until Nov. 2018. My hobbies are: reading non-fiction, and writing fiction, and I adore everything about dogs!

Our eldest daughter Rachael Bess Littman has achieved some fame in the US and Canada as a Cantor, singing in Yiddish and Hebrew. She has a degree from Rutgers, a B.M. in Classical Voice from the Manhattan School of Music, a Masters of Sacred Music from the Jewish Theological Seminary (where she was ordained as a Cantor); and a Doctor of Ministry in Interfaith Pastoral Counselling from Hebrew Union College. She is now at Temple Har Zion, Thornhill, Ontario.

Our middle daughter, Rebecca Michael (name Michael is after great aunt Mooshele) Aaronson, is a High School Counselor, with a BA and Masters in Counseling Psychology from Rutgers U. She is married to Glenn Aaronson, and they have a son, Lincoln Joseph (named after Joseph Starkman), and live in Manalapan. Rebecca is also an artist.

Our youngest, Emily Lila Rindenau, has a pre-Med/Political Science BA from Rutgers U., and a Masters from University of N. Carolina in Healthcare Administration. Until 2019 she served as the NY Presbyterian Hospital's Service Line Director for Women's Health & Pediatrics. She is married to Jason and has 2 children, older daughter, Sophie Belle (named after Sonia), and a son, Maxwell Jacob (J after grandpa Joe). In 2019 they relocated to Fort Lauderdale, FL.

**In my perspective:** After the war, my parents lived with quite a number of ghosts, and of course, tremendous trauma; and painful emotional turmoil. This was not called PTSD at the time. My mother kept it internal, and seemed to explode within herself. But my dad manifested this outwardly and randomly with his family, and sometimes with others. As I grew up, they rarely gave details of all they endured. However, later in life, the "flood gates" opened. My mom would repeatedly initiate conversation with strangers and began her story "I lost a son." Or, in the middle of doing housework, or my doing homework, she'd open up about her Holocaust experience, repetitively. My dad and mom shared all of this with my children. In their stories, there were bits of light. My mom, who could run in 6 inch heels, explained that after her father's passing, when she was 16, she never told her mother she knew how to cook. She was afraid that if she did so, she would not only be responsible for all the housework, but for cooking too. My dad would tell me that his 18 month old son Leibele, used to greet him each morning by running around his bed, singing "*Tato tato, daj mi buziaka.*" (Daddy, daddy, give me a kiss.)

I recall my brother Sid saying "Generations of immense talent and brilliance were lost." But the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation survivors are here to remind the world that we, as Jews, survived, and still exist. Each day we have is precious because of those we remember and never forget. It's good for us to remain grateful for family we have, but try to create value within the lives we still live and that of others.



### Contributed by Sidney Starkman

*Escape from Novogrudek work camp/ghetto: Truth is stranger than fiction.*

My father Joseph learned of the deaths of his 18 month old son Leib and 3 month old daughter Shulamit, only after my parents were imprisoned by the Nazis in a work camp. One day in the camp, Joe went with his niece to fill a pail with water from a pond at the edge of the camp. Distraught the deaths of the babies, this time dad just gave the pail to his niece and told her to go back. He impulsively decided to escape to the forests, and fully expected to be killed by the Nazis, or by hostile locals. He left my mom and the family in the camp. When he got into the forest he met up with a Russian partisan group, who didn't trust him (as he was Jewish). They took him prisoner. Joe saw that they needed medicine and doctors, so he told them that he was willing to risk his life, go back to the camp, and come back with doctors. They let him go on what they expected to be a one-way mission. But Joe got into the camp, got hold of some Jewish doctors who also wanted to escape, expecting to return to the partisans. Sonia wanted to go with them, but Joe was afraid that Sonia was so tiny and frail that she would not survive, so left her behind.

However, the mission back was not successful, it was an ambush. When my dad and the doctors came out of the tunnel, the sky "lit up with fireworks" and most of the group were killed. However, Joe survived, and made it to safety. Later, having no choice, Sonia escaped and made it to the forest on her own. She recalled that she hid in the forest for 4 days without food or water. Finally she got to a clearing and noticed a hiding place (likely an underground bunker, a *zemlyankas*) of a partisan group. Lo and behold, when she got in, who was there? Miraculously, it was Joe! So, in 1942, they were reunited. This group was the 'Stalin' partisan *otriad* (brigade), and Joe soon brought Ruvkeh into this group.

On April 13, 1945 I was born in a hospital in Minsk, one months before the war ended in Poland. My parents were with the Russian partisans then, but when it was time for the birth, the commander sent Sonia to Minsk to give birth, in consideration of her sacrifices and Joe's courageous acts. Sonia had been a fighter as well as cook, cooking for 50 people at a time. At the same time, my dad was still sent on dangerous missions. The Russian commander said Joe should go take care of Sonia and their child in Minsk. So, my father was lucky and was at my birth, and unexpected surprise. It turned out to be lucky too, as the mission my dad would have been on resulted in the deaths of the entire group, in one of their last battles.

After the war ended the three of us travelled by train back to Poland. But on the train my parents were warned that the Jews returning to Poland were being slaughtered by enduringly anti-Semitic Poles. So, we headed for Italy.

I now specialize in Emergency Medicine Neurology at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center and UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center. My son is Tyler.



Sonia, Joe, Sidney. 1946, DP camp?  
This was a postcard photo



Sonia's baby Leib, ~5 months.  
Killed by Nazis. Sonia never got over the





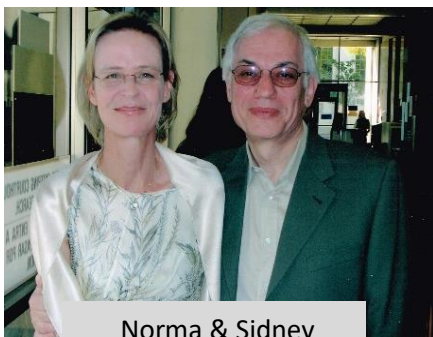
Faygele, ~12 yrs



Joe, Rose, Sid 2012



Emily, Jason, Sophie & Maxwell Joseph Rindenau



Norma & Sidney



Sidney & Tyler



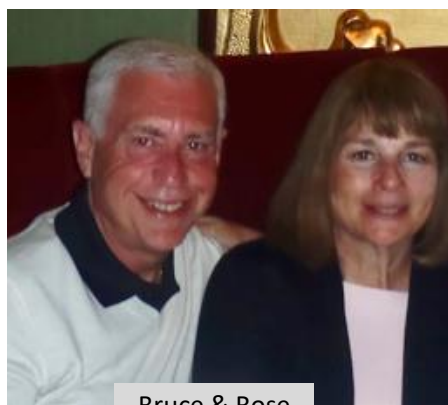
Rebecca, Glenn & Lincoln Joseph Aaronson



Sonia & Rose in London



Cantor Rachael Littman



Bruce & Rose



Brighton Beach. Sidney, Roz, Rose. Marcia's son Kenny, Aaron



## **Zeltzer Family – Rubin's aunt was Ida [Bloch] Zeltzer**

### **Contributions by Ellen (Zeltzer) Levine, daughter of Irving Seltzer (Rubin's first cousin)**

Of Rubin's fairly large family before the war, at least 50 of Rubin's aunts, uncles, and cousins perished. Of his immediate family, only Rubin and his sister Sonia (Sophia) survived. Rubin often lamented that he could never find where his mother, and his little sisters, may have died, or how, or where, or even if, they may have been buried. Rubin and Sonia's closest relatives after the war were several aunts and cousins in the US, and uncle (Zvi) in Israel. Zvi's family perished.

Rubin's paternal grandfather Eli Chaim Segalowicz, had 7 children with his wife Yudasha (maiden name unknown): sons Leib (Rubin's father), Yitzhak, Moshe, Meyer, Alte, Zvi, and daughter Gitel. Of this family, only Rubin's uncle Zvi survived the war. Zvi came to Israel on the famous ship Exodus. He lived in Israel, and the family met with him, in the US and in Israel.

Rubin's maternal grandparents were Israel and Kuneh Bloch (maiden name unknown). Israel and Kuneh had 8 children, and 4 others who died while very young. Kuneh Bloch's 8 children were Fanny, Rhoda, Chaya Moosha (Ida), Reyzel (Rubin's mom), Yankel, Chanan, Moishe, David. The 3 sisters, Fanny, Rhoda, and Ida, had all luckily come to the US as young girls before the war. All the 4 Bloch men and their families, a total of 20 people, were killed.

### **Contributed By Ellen [Zeltzer] Levine, daughter of Irving Zeltzer (Rubin's 1<sup>st</sup> cousin):**

Rubin's aunt, Ida (*Chaya Moosha*) Bloch, came from the Ivey region in Belarus, the same region as much of the Kozlowski family was from. Sisters Ida, Fannie and Rhoda all came to the US as young girls. Fannie married Joseph Wells, and they lived in Hicksville, LI. The Wells had 2 sons Eugene (died young) and Frank. Frank married Goldy, and had a son Stuart and 2 daughters.

Ida Bloch married Morris Zeltzer in 1917. They had 2 sons, Irving (Yisrael) and Fred (Ephraim). Irving and his wife Ray (Perl) had 2 daughters, Ellen (Zeltzer) Levine and Sandra (Zeltzer) Raiten. Fred and wife Shirley had 2 children, Lee and Abbie Ilene. Abbie was married for a short time. Lee was married to Jennifer Starke, and had 4 children: Nicholas, Ashley, Sebastian, and Marjorie. Irving and Fred were Rubin's and Sonia's first cousins.

Morris Zeltzer's family was from Wolyn in Vilna. Vilna was then part of Poland, but is now in Lithuania. Some documents list the home town of his father Abraham as Luibomi (Liubomi, or *Libivne* in Yiddish), Ukraine, near the Belarus border. Abraham was a furrier, a common Jewish trade. These towns and *shtetls* had very high Jewish populations, some up to 90% Jews. The 1942 mass killings wiped out all Jews in these towns.

Morris came to the USA in 1912 at age 16. In first lived as a lodger in an apartment at 64 Montgomery Street, NYC. His parents, Avraham Lipa Zeltzer and Edith (Adelman), also had a son Sam Seltzer married to Ida (Itelson), and a sister Sylvia married to Benny Meyers. They each had 3 daughters. An older sister Tova was married and stayed in Vilna. Abraham, Edith and Sylvia arrived in Boston on February 24, 1921. Abram Selcer, with his family, planned to go to their son Sam Seltzer, living on Ludlow Street in NYC.

Irving's children are:

- Ellen and Robert Levine, who have 2 children. Adam and Jeremy. Jeremy met his wife Sara in Israel and have 2 sons, Noach and Asher. Jeremy had been studying in Jerusalem at Ohr Somayach. After marriage they lived in Har Nof. In 2009 son Asher was born there, then they came back to the US.
- Sandra and husband Harvey, who also have 2 children. Jennifer is married to Jon Paskoff and they have a son Alex and daughter Julia (from a previous marriage). Their son Eric is married to Samantha (Sayet) and have a son Dylan and daughter, Emma.



My mom was Ray (Ratza in Yiddish) Perl before she married my dad. Ray was born in NY in 1923. Ray's dad was Yaakov Shmuel (Samuel) Perl, and Ray's mom was Rachel Freida (Rose) Perl (born Wiesel--- Yes, that Wiesel!). Rachel Wiesel was born in Sighet Romania in 1898. Ray's mom is related to Elie Wiesel's family, all from Romania, where Elie Wiesel himself was born.

Of her family, I (Ellen) only knew aunt Fannie Bloch Wells, and Ida's nephew Rubin Segal. I did not know my grandmom's sister Rhoda. I keep searching for Fannie's immigration papers, without luck. Fannie may have been under 18 when she came to the US. To come to the US, Ida Bloch lied about her age, as she was traveling alone. I found one document where Ida was detained or processed at Ellis Island, under the name Chaya Bloch.

In my spare time, my hobbies include genealogy, stained glass, baking, cooking, and family.

**Background: Zeltzer --- -Segalowicz. From Ivye to America**

Ida Bloch's family came from the *shtetl* of Ivye, or possibly its surrounding hamlets. Ivye was an established *shtetl*, with a church, village center, *schuls*, marketplace, and *Cheder* (Jewish school). People from the hamlets (*dorfs*) would often say they came from the associated *shtetl*, as few people knew of the tiny *dorfs*.

Many young students left their family homes to go to the *cheder*, a common practice. Rubin's cousin Miriam taught in the Ivye school. It is here, in Ivye, that the fateful connection between the Zeltzer and Segal families developed, before Morris Zeltzer met Ida Bloch, and before Rubin Segalowicz met Ida Kozlowski.

Ida's aunt Rivka (Kozlowski) Baksht and her husband rented out rooms of their home to earn money. One of the rooms Rivka rented was to Kuneh Bloch, the widowed grandmother of Rubin (Segalowicz). **Kuneh was the mother of Chaya (Ida) Bloch, Rubin's aunt, who later married Morris Zeltzer!! And/so Kuneh was the great-grandmother of Ellen Levine.**

Kuneh shared her room in Rivka's home with her grandson Rubin when he was sent to study in Ivye. By the time Ida Kozlowski was ten, in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she was on her third school, the earlier ones being in Mikalaiveh and Karelích. Ida was trading places with her younger brother Joe as he started to attend school, as the families they lived with often did not have enough food for more than one more mouth. So Ida stayed with her aunt Rifka Baksht during school days.

So, young Ida Kozlowski and Rubin Segalowicz were both staying in the same house, along with Ida Zeltzer's mother Kuneh, (Ellen Levine's great-grandmother) a fateful event.

{Similarly, Reizel Segalowicz rented rooms in her home, and one of her boarders was young handsome Joe Starkman, who would marry Reizel's daughter Sonia Segalowicz.}



Irving & Fred  
Irving's Bar Mitzvah



Ida & Morris, w/Morris's parents  
Avraham & Edith, sons Fred & Irving



Morris, Ida, Fred, Irving





Ray & Irving, ~1990



Ellen [Z.] & Robert Levine



Ray



Lee (Fred's son), Fred, Joan, Irving, Ray, Harvey, Ellen, Robert and Sandi. Ida & Morris seated



Morris & Ida  
with Ellen at her wedding reception



Sandi with granddaughter Julia (left), Jennifer (right), Ellen center 2015



Sandi's daughter Jennifer & husband Jon Paskoff



Sandi's son Jeremy (Yaakov) Levine, wife, Sara/Jennifer (Bilovsky) sons Noach & Asher. 2015





Sandi with daughter Julia (left), Jennifer (right), Ellen center 2015



Ray & Irving, 1990



Fred Z.



Grandpa Irving & Great grandpa Morris w/grandson Jeremy Levine.



Harvey Raiten & granddaughter Emma



Sara & Yaakov, Tarzana CA 2020. Note Covid masks



Irving & Ray wedding



Sandi & grandson Alex Paskoff, 5 yrs



## Uncle David & Tante Jennie Kazlowsky

Contributed by Ira K., Andrea Carson Gottesman, Deborah Carson, Ilene [K.] Markus; Gary Kazlow

### **The Carson, Kazlow, Kaslofsky family – Relationship to the Kozlowski & Segal families**

The Kazlow family is descended from Yosef Kozlowski, who lived Poland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yosef had 8 children with 2 wives (so some brothers were technically half-brothers). Wife Rachel (surname unknown) was the mother of **David Kazlowski**, and his siblings Toby Rose Kozlowski, Leib Kozlowski, Yitzhak Kozlowski. Sara Doba Goldsmith was the mother of Chanah Kozlowski, Rifka Kozlowski Baksht; Rose Kozlowski; and Chaim Kozlowski (father of Ida, Marcia, Joe, and Gloria). Most if not all of the Kozlowski men were blacksmiths in Europe, and a frequent thread through the families, to this day, is that the descendant sons and children 'were good with their hands'.

- David and Jennie (né Zelda Charney) Kazlowski had 3 sons Bernie Carson, Joey (Heshie) Kaslofsky, and Fred Kazlow. These 3 brothers were 1<sup>st</sup> cousins to Chaim's children Ida, Marcia, Joe & Gloria; and to Ira's dad Joe K., as well as others

--David & Jennie's offspring were 3 sons: Oldest Bernie; Joey; and youngest Freddie

- Bernie's wife – Bernice. daughters: Andrea Carson & Deborah Carson Gottesman
- Joey's children: Ilene Kaslofsky Markus & Jeff Kaslofsky.
- Freddie's wife – Gloria. Children: Gary Kazlow & Susan Kazlow Friedland

*Tante Jennie* was famous in our family for her practice of carrying packets of photos of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, showing them off to everyone..

- David's brother Itzhak, who died in Europe, was father of Joseph (Joe) Kazlow (wife Phyllis), known as 'Joe the baker'.
  - Joe's children are Ira Kazlow (wife Linda) and Arlene [K.] Feldman, husband Arthur.
- David's brother Chaim was father of Ida (Chaya) [Kozlowski] Segal (husband Rubin Segal); Marcia [Kozlowski] Albert (husband Morris); Joseph Kazlow (wife Dinah, living); and Gloria Kozlowski. This immediate family survived the war intact, one of very few.
- Thus, David was the uncle to all of Chaim's children, and to Itzhak's son Joseph. As so many nieces and nephews correctly used 'uncle Dave and *tante* Jennie', the rest of the family also called them 'uncle and *tante*', even if not accurate.
- Chaim's family were:
  - Ida and Rubin Segal, with children Leon, Aaron, and Roz [Segal] Eisenstadt.
    - Leon & wife Patti's children are Neal, Danny, Darren (deceased: Deborah & Jennifer)
    - Roz's children by Jerry Nogin (deceased) are Jason, Eric, and Yale
    - Aaron's children with wife Karen are Jennifer (now Mannasse) and Steven
  - Marcia [K.] Albert's children are Linda (Amacio) Albert and Howard Albert
  - Joe Kazlow's children, with wife Dinah Magids (living) are
    - Philip G. Kazlow (wife Leah) with children Chani Rifka, Moshe, Esther, David, Chaim Zvi
    - Gloria [K.] Stulberger (husband Jerry) with children Mara and Michelle Stulberger
  - Gloria K. was killed by a drunk driver at the age of 21.

So many descendants were named after David and Jennie, two very kind and caring people: Note all the David's, Deborah's, Jennifer's, Darren, Dylan, in our family.



## The Families of 'Uncle Dave & Tante Jennie' Kazlowski

### Contributions noted in subsections, from many Kazlow descendants

This section describes the several families that had come to America before the war-, and helped in the immigration of orphaned Joseph Kazlow ('Joe-the-Baker'), and others. The families were those of 'Uncle Dave' Kazlowski, (Brooklyn) and Toby Rose [K.] Cohen and the Polonsky's in upstate NY.

The first edition section entitled 'A Dream Fulfilled' briefly describes how Ida's 'Uncle Dave' and his wife 'Tante Jennie' helped the entire Segalowicz and Kazlowski/Kazlowski families emigrate and get settled in America. Uncle Dave had 2 siblings who had come to the US before the war: sister Toby Rose (Cohen); and Rose Kazlowski ('Aunt Rose from Albany'). Technically, David, Yitzhak, and Toby Rose were half-brothers/sisters of Ida's father Chaim, as their father Yosef had 2 wives: Rachel, and then Doba Goldsmith after Rachel's death. But in our family, 'half-brother/sister' was not a term commonly used—they were sisters and brothers.

Kind-hearted David Kazlowski helped others to immigrate to the US as well. He helped Rubin's sister Sonia and her family, and we think he sponsored non-relatives as well.

David's sisters were brave, emigrating to the US on their own as teenagers: Aunt Rose ('Aunt Rose from Albany') and Toby Rose (*Taibele Rachel*) from Ellenville. David's other siblings who perished in the Holocaust with their families were: Leib K. and his family of 2; Chanah K. and her family of 6; Rifka K. (Baksht) and family of 5; and Yitzhak K., Ira's grandfather.

For a better life, and to avoid being drafted into the Russian army, David Kazlowsky went to America as a young man. Jews were cannon fodder for the Russians - "once you went into the army, you never came back." Jews in the army were forced to eat pork, not allowed to attend *shul*, and were put at the front of the front lines. Outside the military, land ownership and many professions were out of the reach of Jews. David had been a blacksmith in Poland, as had most of the Kazlofsky men. He made metal tools, rakes, shovels, rims for wagon wheels etc. In the USA, there was not much call for blacksmiths in the cities, so David became a sewing machine operator and tailor. He was highly skilled ,and made a model and pattern of each garment. Jennie also worked in a factory until her children were born.

The first large purchase David and Jennie made after they got married was a sewing machine! They saved scraps of fabric they collected from the factory and made clothing for friends and relatives. Pictures of Joe K. in Europe, just before he came to the US, show a very well-dressed handsome young man in a nice suit---a suit that uncle Dave had made solely from mailed measurements and photos.

After marriage Dave and Jennie lived in a 5 story walk-up apartment in Manhattan. Later, they moved to an apartment on Powell Street in Brooklyn's Brownsville section. In the 1950's Brownsville was a very pleasant largely Jewish area. There were so many Jewish immigrants here it was called 'Little Jerusalem'. This apartment later on became a frequent gathering place for the relatives arriving in the U.S. Sons. Bernie, Joey (Heshie), and youngest son Fred were born there, within 5 years of each other. Fred married his HS sweetheart, Gloria and had 3 children: Susan Kazlow Friedland; Dr. Gary Kazlow, and Jodi Dawn Kazlow. Bernie married another educator, Bernice, and had daughters Andrea and Deborah.

All 3 sons loved children and were very family oriented. They were all also "good with their hands", as David had been. Bernie became an industrial arts teacher; Joe worked with food in a deli and was a food artist, making 'bagel-men'. Fred became a successful dentist, practicing in Savannah GA, where he had served as a military dentist.



Dave and Jennie loved children and were warm, generous, and welcoming. They were good friends with a young couple, also from Europe, who also had 3 children, the Delitsky's. When Morris died suddenly, Jennie told his widow that she would take care of the 3 children so she could go to work. So Jennie took it upon herself to care for her own 3 children and the Delitsky's 3 children. This is just an example of their character and values.

When the Kazlowski heard that some relatives had survived the war, and saw photos of their plight in the DP camps, they did everything they could to get them the immigration documents and permits, and then welcomed them into their family. Jennie and Dave were also in contact with Joe's aunt, David's sister, Toby Rose Cohen in Ellenville. Toby Rose, her husband Joseph Cohen, and their daughter Rae and her husband Sol were also involved. Uncle Dave and Tante Jennie's children Bernie, Joey (Heshie), and Freddie, were all young men when their relatives arrived in the U.S. This entire family was very sympathetic to the plight of their refugee relatives, and generous and selfless beyond words. When Bernie saw pictures of the family in the DP camps, and the newsreels of the refugees, he said to his parents 'we have to help our family, we must do something.' And they did do something....actually many things. Jennie was famous for her saying, "Essen, essen" (eat!, eat!) to all of them, even though there was not a great amount of food in their fairly poor household. It's no wonder that so many people in our family are named after Uncle David and *Tante* Jennie--note all our family names that start with D or J.

- Joseph K. had remained in contact with uncle Dave and his Aunt Rae and other family members while in Europe. Joe was an orphan, and so received special consideration for early immigration. Joe was the first relative that uncle Dave and the Cohens helped come to America. Uncle Dave took it upon himself to be responsible for his nephew.

### **Contributed by Bernie's children, Deborah & Andrea: "Our Father, Bernie"**

Dave Kazlowsky (born 1890) was our Grandpa Dave. We knew that to many others he was known as Uncle Dave, even to people he was not an uncle to. He was a kind, quiet, gentle, and endearing man, as evidenced by the comments of the officials he dealt with in getting his nephew Joseph to the U.S. He was very patient with his grandchildren. He played dominoes with us—always allowing us to win!. He was devoted to his family, to grandma Jenny, to his sons Bernie, Joey, and Freddie—and to his family in Europe. Grandma Jenny loved children, loved cooking, and feeding her family. When she travelled to Florida to visit Joe's family, and to Savannah to visit Freddie's family, she brought along blintzes and mandel bread, and would cook chicken soup with matzo balls. She helped take care of her great-grandsons Richard and David when she was in her 90's. She would say that David was a brilliant eater.

David came to the US as a young man. He became a US citizen on March 22, 1915, and died on May 25, 1964, at age 74. His Naturalization Certificate is shown here, and is unlike later certificates as no photo is included, and it was issued by the US Dept. of Labor (later certificates were issued by the Dept. of Justice, or now by the Dept. of Homeland Security).

Jennie was born on July 15, 1896, and came to the USA in 1912, at age 16, courageously travelling by herself in a ship's steerage. Her entire family that remained in the Vilna region of Lithuania, perished in the Holocaust, and she felt guilt for that her entire life. She embraced David's family as if they were her own. Jennie was devoted to her family—whenever she arrived at family events, she immediately pulled out her thick packet of family photos to show, *kvelling* over each child, grandchild, and great-grandchild.

David and Jennie were married on April 13, 1917, in NYC. Jennie was 20 years old, and David was 27. Their marriage affidavit lists her birthplace as Vilna, Russia –Vilnius was the capital of



Lithuania, historically often under Russian rule. Poland and Lithuania both claimed Vilna after WWI. Jennie died Oct. 15, 1995, at the age of 99.

**David and Jennie's marriage license affidavit shows her maiden name as [Zelda Charney](#).**

An interesting letter from the Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel in Brooklyn (below) confirms that this was truly Jennie's Jewish name, as strange as that sounds, with the comment "There is absolutely no question about this fact" (of her name).

Our dad Bernie was a junior HS shop teacher and met our mom Bernice, a math teacher, in 1950. Bernie was a mechanic in the US Army Air Force, and was finished college under the US GI bill. They were married in 1951. Daughters Andrea and Deborah are now both nurse practitioners. Our parents changed their surname from Kazlowsky to Carson at time of marriage. My dad was initially hesitant about discussing this with grandpa Dave. But he finally said, "Pop, when Bernice and I get married, I am going to change my name from Kazlowsky to Carson...How would you feel about that?" David replied, "It wouldn't bother me too much.....Kazlowsky was never our real name anyway....".Then Dave launched into the stories we all know about everyone using the Kazlowsky name and its many variations!

**{Before Kazlowski, the family name had been Leibman.** Jewish families changed their surnames often in those countries, often to help avoid being drafted into the Russian or Polish armies to serve as cannon fodder. Kazlowsky may have been more Polish-sounding than Jewish.)

Interestingly, the 3 brothers eventually had different last names. Bernie became Carson. Freddie became Kazlow. Joseph chose Kazlofsky, which is pronounced the same as their parent's Kozlowski, or Kozlovski, as the polish 'W' can be pronounced as 'V'.

Andrea has 2 sons Richard and David. David is married to Elena and they have a son Ruben born in 2018, and they are expecting a girl in April 2021. Richard has a Ph.D. in mathematics and is doing a postdoc at Queens University in Ontario.

Joe Kazlow was known to us as 'Joe-the-Baker', it was a one word description. Their Glen Oaks bakery was on Union Turnpike in Queens, and was constantly busy, because they were great bakers. Joe-the-Baker would bring boxes of cakes and cookies to all family functions. He and our father Bernie were very close and later in life they spent a lot of time together. When we came to visit Joe, Bernie would take Richard to visit Joe's bakery. We remember Joe-the-Baker, and his wife Phyllis with great fondness.

We admire and respect Ida, Rubin, Marcia who came to this country having survived the horrors of the war, learned English, worked hard, raised and supported families. They never complained and were positive, and loving people who contributed to society and continued Jewish families.

Fred married his summer camp sweetheart Gloria (Shapiro). Fred practiced dentistry for over 50 years in Savannah GA for many years, following his stint in the US Air Force in Savanna. Fred had 3 children (Susan Kazlow Friedland; Gary Kazlow; and Jodi Dawn Kazlow) and 4 grandchildren:(Arielle Kazlow; Sam, David and Mariah Friedland. Fred C. Kazlow died at the age of 80 in March 2010.

Joe Kaslofsky was married to Sylvia [Blaustein] for 54 years. Their children: Jeffrey Kaslofsky, Ilene Markus (Stuart), and Elyse. Joey and Sylvia had grandchildren: David Markus (Mona), Joel Markus (Lisa), Robyn Soldevilla (Mark), Wendy Kaslofsky, Dennis Kaslofsky; great-grandchildren, Nicole, Kate, Megan Simone Markus, Annabella and Juliette Soldevilla.



### **Contributed by Gary Kazlow: Son of Fred, the youngest Kazlowsky brother**

Our father, Fred Kazlow, was the youngest of 3 sons born to David and Jenny Kazlowsky in Brownsville, Brooklyn. David and Jenny immigrated (separately) from Eastern Europe to seek a better life, entering NY at Ellis Island. In NY, grandpa David was a tailor and grandma Jenny raised her sons and worked in a fish market when she could find work. They were poor, as were most other Jewish immigrants at that time. They were devoted parents, and raised their sons, Bernie, Joe, and Freddy, to be loving, happy people.

Freddy was a good student and excelled in math and science, but he preferred to play stickball in the street with his friends and brothers. There was a distant cousin, I was told, who was a dentist. Becoming a medical professional seemed unreachable for the son of poor Jewish immigrants, but he was coaxed by our mother, Gloria, to do just that.

Freddy met future wife, Gloria Shapiro, while they both worked as counselors at the Berkshire Pines summer camp. Freddy and Gloria fell in love there and married when they graduated from college. Gloria had a degree in Spanish literature, which led to her employment at a brand-new company called Pepsi-Cola. She worked as a Spanish–English translator in the import- export department. She supported her husband as he went through dental school.

When our father Fred, graduated from dental school, he shortened his name to Kazlow for professional reasons. Since his school deferral then ended, he was drafted into the Korean War. He served as a dentist and was stationed at Hunter Army Airbase in Savannah, Georgia. (Yes, the US air force was initially part of the Army.) There was enormous trepidation in leaving the great North and moving to a small Southern town—Savannah, Georgia. Our mother packed a year's supply of Colgate toothpaste in case they did not have any down there. After his 1<sup>st</sup> year of service, their 1<sup>st</sup> child, Susan Amy, was born.

We did not know our grandfather, David, very well as he died when we were very young. Grandma Jenny spent much of the year taking turns staying with each of her 3 sons. She would take the Greyhound bus from NY to Savannah or Miami whenever she went. She was always there when a child was born, or when there was a need, and she was indispensable. She enriched all of our lives, speaking Yiddish and broken English as she cooked *kreplach* soup, matzo balls, blintzes, chopped liver, *kishka*, *kugel*, *tzimmes* and *kasha varnishkas*. She was a talented seamstress, and fixed everyone's clothing on her sewing machine. I think we all still have garments that she had sown our nametags in before we left for summer camp. Grandma Jenny had survivor's guilt, as most of her Eastern European family perished in the Holocaust. She channeled this energy into loving devotion to her children and grandchildren.

The worries that Fred and Gloria had about the South were short-lived. Fortunately, they had two very distant cousins who lived in Savannah, and, to their great surprise, Savannah had an active synagogue and Jewish community. With newly found friends, family, Jewish community, and a baby, Gloria fell in love with Savannah. She worked as a teacher and also worked on the board of their synagogue and Board of Education. She loved theatre and dance, and participated in Savannah's Little Theater, and, later in life, the senior pageant.

It would take many years for Freddy to make peace with the South. When he did, he had great success with the people of Savannah and in his dental practice. He became quite a beloved Savannah fixture, standing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor balcony of his office, smoking cigars and looking at the people busily walking up and down Liberty and Bull streets. He was so well-known and liked that there was a major newspaper story featuring him and his dental practice in the Savannah morning news. He would capture people in one of his many warm and humorous stories. He



was very good with his hands and made all manner of interesting crafts and jewelry. He became an accomplished chef and baker. His popovers, fruit tarts and Killer Chocolate Cake were enjoyed by the many guests who came to his gourmet kitchen. He used his superb people skills to gather his recipes. When he wanted to know how to make authentic Korean ribs, he went to the Koreans' barbecue gatherings, to get the recipe. When he wanted to make Greek baklava, he went to the home of his Greek mechanic to watch how it was made. In later life, he became a model shipbuilder. He practiced dentistry until the very day he died at age 80. Gloria died 2 years later at age 82, after a stroke.

Gloria and Fred had 3 children, Susan, Gary, and Jodi. Susan attended Oberlin College and became a teacher and artist. She married Lance Friedland, a cardiologist, and they live in the northern Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta. Gary went to college and med school at Emory University, and became an internist/pulmonologist. His wife, Lauren, works as his office manager and is a part-time interior designer. Jodi Kazlow lives in Statesboro Georgia and works as a part-time screen writer and aspires to collaborate with Stephen Spielberg.

Susan and Lance Friedland have 3 children, Sam, Dave and Mariah. Sam and his wife, Tania, live in Manhattan and work in real estate. Dave Friedland also lives in Manhattan and is an executive at EQ3. Mariah Friedland lives in Atlanta Georgia and works as an event planner/executive for a realty company. Gary and Lauren Kazlows' daughter, Arielle, lives in Boston and works as a speech language pathologist.

#### **Contributed by Ilene Kaslofsky Markus, Joey's Daughter**

I wish I knew more about how my parents met!

Our family was so close to Freddie's family growing up and we loved spending vacations and especially Thanksgiving at our house in Miami with your family. My parents certainly made a feast and we so loved being together. Another thing that stands out in my mind is that Gary's parents Freddy and Gloria made a point of always coming to any occasion we had.....weddings, bar mitzvahs, more. Your mom would take pictures and then send them to us, with captions on the back and a beautiful letter. Those meant so much to us.

I guess the Kaslofsky brothers were good chefs! My Dad loved to prepare meals for those he loved and did a great job. He catered every affair I had, including David's bris, and decorated everything so beautifully. Everyone who knew him remembers that about him.

I loved my Grannie Jennie and Grandpa Dave. When they came to Florida to visit and stay with us. Grannie would always make tons of blintzes and we all loved them. Unfortunately, I do remember that Grandpa Dave passed away in Miami on one of their visits. I came home to that news one day after school.

As for my family...I was married to Stuart Markus, an attorney and my boss! for 42 years before he passed away. We had a wonderful life. David, our first son, is a Federal criminal defense lawyer in Miami married to Mona, also a criminal defense attorney, who he met at Harvard Law School. They were married in 1998 and have 3 beautiful redheaded girls. Nicole who is 18, Kate who is 15 and Megan who is 11. They live in Miami. Joel, our second son, lives in Naples, Florida and is the CFO to a theatre there called Gulfshore Playhouse. He is married to Lisa, who is a nurse in the hospital there. They are parents to 12-year old Simone and Isaac who is almost 8 and our only grandson....after 6 granddaughters! Robyn, our 3<sup>rd</sup> child and only daughter, is married to Mark Soldevilla and they run an online course for divorce and child custody cases. They have 2 daughters; Annabella, 14 and Juliette, 12. They live in Miami also.



**It turns out that Uncle David's generosity and kindness went past his family.**  
**When Rubin Segal could not sponsor his sister's family (Sonia & Joe Starkman)**  
**immigration to the US from England, Uncle David accepted that responsibility.**  
**We believe uncle Dave also sponsored some refugees who had no familial relationships.**



David & Jennie Kazlowski. Believe wedding- photo because of rings on Jennie's finger



1960's. Aunt Jennie, Bubba Leah, Aunt Rose (from Albany). Possibly at wedding of Carol & Harvey Brand ?



March 2002. Bernie, Bernice, Rubin, Ida at Joe & Phyllis wedding anniversary party. Phyllis holding Ira's youngest son Jonathan. Abby seater to right. couple to left are friends.





Friday, December 31

## **Ilene Kaslofsky, Stuart A. Markus Married Sunday**

Ilene M. Kaslofsky, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kaslofsky, 3143 NW Flagler Terrace, and Stuart A. Markus, son of Mrs. Rose Lanet and Alexander Markus of Chicago, were married Sunday Nov. 28 in a candlelight ceremony at the Algiers Hotel. Rabbi Herbert M. Baumgard officiated at the 7 p. m. ritual. A reception and dinner followed.

The bride's gown was Chantilly lace trimmed with pearls.

Lucy Pardo was the maid of honor, and bridesmaids included Susan Kaslofsky, sister of the bride, and Robert Miller. Leonard Spitalne was the best man. Ushers were Jeff Kaslofsky, the brother of the bride, and Robert Winter.

The bride, a graduate of Miami-Dade Junior College North, is active in B.B.G. The bridegroom, a practicing attorney, is a graduate of the University of Miami School of Law. He is a member of Tau Epsilon Phi legal fraternity.



**MRS. STUART A. MARKUS**

**ROYAL PALM  
HOTEL**  
KOSHER CATERING  
DINING ROOM OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC  
PLEASE PHONE  
FOR RESERVATIONS







2015. Richard, bride & groom Elena & David  
Gottesman, Bernice, Deborah, Andrea



2020. Deborah & Andrea



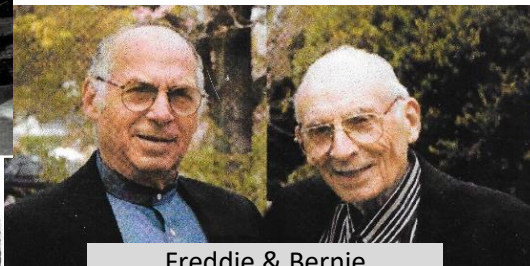
Andrea



Uncle Dave



Joey, Bernie, David, Freddie at Powell St. 1949



Freddie & Bernie



1956. Bernice, Bernie, Jennie, David, Joey, Sylvia  
w/children Ilene & Jeff, Freddie, Gloria



David, Elena, Ruben 2019 –  
Red PJ's are Chanukah gift from Andrea





Joey, Freddie, Bernie



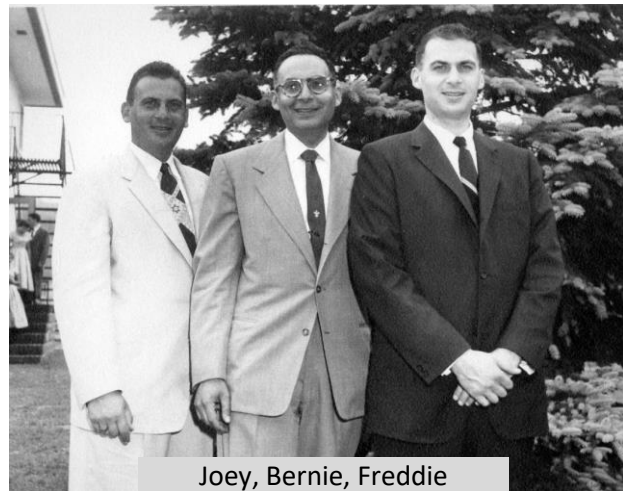
Joey's wedding



David, Joey, Sylvia



Joey at work



Joey, Bernie, Freddie

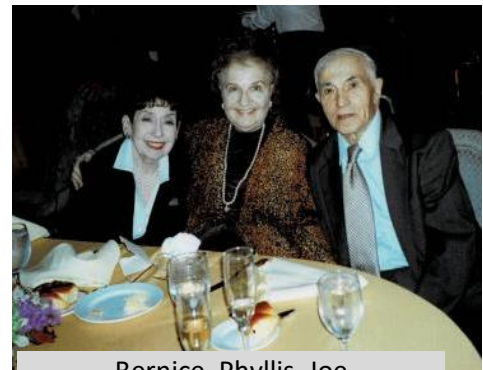


Sylvia, Gloria, Freddie, Bernie  
Joey, Bernice



Sylvia's parents, Sylvia Jennie, David



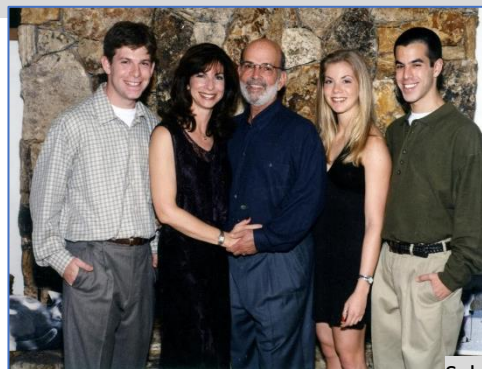


Bernice, Phyllis, Joe

2016. From left. Ilene's daughter Robyn, son Joel, Juliette (Robyn & Mark's daughter) is above, Mark behind tree. Kate (David's daughter), Simone (Joel's daughter), Megan & Nicole (David), Isaac (Ilene's only grandson!) from Joel, Lisa (Joel's wife), Annie (Robyn's daughter), my son David & wife Mona



Ilene's son Joel, Lisa, children Isaac & Simone



Ilene & Stuart with children David, Robyn, Joel



Sylvia (Ilene's mom) on left, Joey on right with mom Jennie. Fred & Gloria in back; Elyse K. (Ilene's sister); Front: Susan, Gary & Jodi Kazlow



Ilene Kaslofsky & Stuart Markus wedding 11.28.1971

STATE OF NEW YORK  
Affidavit for License to Marry

STATE OF NEW YORK  
County of New York, City of New York

Daniel Kaslofsky  
and Jennie Shapira

applicants for a license for marriage, being severally sworn, depose and say, that to the best of their knowledge and belief the following statement respectively signed by them is true, and that no legal impediment exists as to the right of the applicants to enter into the marriage now.

Full name Daniel Kaslofsky Full name Jennie Shapira  
Color White Color White  
Place of residence Brooklyn, NY Place of residence Brooklyn, NY  
Age 27 Age 20  
Occupation Teacher Occupation Homemaker  
Place of birth Brooklyn, NY Place of birth Brooklyn, NY

Congregation B'nai Israel  
1540 Van Siclen Avenue • Brooklyn, New York 11229 • (718) 642-8804

April 27, 1992

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Jennie Kaslofsky of 160 Schroeders Avenue, Brooklyn, New York, for over 16 years as a member of my congregation.

Jennie's Jewish name is Zelda. I know this because she oftentimes told me, and we have had numerous occasions over the years to offer the traditional "me anaherach" (get-well) prayer for her. That prayer must incorporate her Jewish name, Zelda, and her mother's name, Ilene.

There is absolutely no question about this fact.

Sincerely,  
Hatti

AG/J1

No. 606215  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
County of New York

Daniel Kaslofsky

Full name Daniel Kaslofsky  
Color White  
Place of residence Brooklyn, NY  
Age 27  
Occupation Teacher  
Place of birth Brooklyn, NY



### Joe Kazlowski – Coming to America:

Contributed by Joe's children Ira Kazlow and Arlene [K.]Feldman

The story of Josef Kazlowski's travails in coming to the U.S. is based on documents that Ira K. gathered from HIAS and other sources. Here are notable excerpts of those documents. There were many typo /name errors, and unsurprisingly Kazlowski was spelled in various ways. The story starts after the war. Because he was an orphan, Josef K. was one of the first to leave Europe, with the rest of the family remaining in DP camps.

- Three main organizations were involved in bringing Josef to the USA:
  - The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the 'Joint')— started in 1881 to help Jewish emigrants from Russia, and expanded in 1914 to help Jews suffering in Ottoman (Turkish) Palestine. This Committee had an Emigration Division.
  - The U.S.N.A. – the United Service for New Americans, an organization founded in 1946 to help Jewish refugees from Europe. This was an offshoot of the National Council of Jewish Women. This organization had a Migration Dept.
  - HIAS – The Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (still in existence, with other missions)
- Josef's Supplemental Record Face Sheet dated May 20, 1947 had the following:
  - Birthdate June 5, 1926. Birth place Minsk, Kojdonow
  - Nationality: Stateless. Passport documentation issued by the International Red Cross in Rome on March 14, 1947 listed Josef as 'Stateless/Emergency'
  - Languages spoken: Russian, Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew.
  - Religion: Jewish
  - Father: Izak Kazlowski, of Glyda-Poland ghetto. Last heard from in 1943.  
Occupation: Locksmith [meant blacksmith—many Kazlowski's were blacksmiths]  
Mother: Anna (Kaplan) Kazlowski
  - Other immediate family: Mr. & Mrs. Sol Polowski, 14 Burlison Ave., Ellenville NY.
- An AJDC emigration Authorization Letter spelled Josef's name Kazlowski.
- Apparently, the aid organizations did not pay passage/transport to the US.
- The letter stated that \$275 for the voyage from Europe was coming from Mr. Polonsky, and that Josef's would reside at the Polonsky's home.
- An interesting letter was sent to Uncle Dave on June 19, 1947, from Ms. Ann Petluck, Director-USNA Migration Dept., referring to 'the case of Josef Kazlowski', as follows:.

"I understand that you recently were in our office to discuss the situation of the above-named. I regret very much that I was not here at the time, so it was necessary for a worker who is not familiar with this situation to discuss it with you.

I was informed that you told the worker that you had arranged with Mr. Polonsky of Ellenville NY to give an affidavit for your nephew, with the understanding that he (Mr. Polonsky) would not be called upon to meet any further expenses. Therefore, you would like us to refund to him the \$275 which he deposited to pay transportation costs of your nephew from Italy to the US, **and you will deposit \$100 instead with the understanding that at a later date you will refund any other money expended by our cooperating committee abroad.**

Your request has been considered very carefully. We regret very much that we cannot meet the request you are making. The arrangement which you have with the Polonsky's is entirely on a private basis. It was not discussed with us at the time the affidavits were submitted and, therefore, we do not feel that we can enter into a plan



in which we did not participate. Actually this is not an arrangement in which we ever participate., since it is our feeling that anyone who gives an affidavit automatically assumes the responsibility which this entails. It has also been impressed upon us by the committees abroad that it is important for relatives here in giving affidavits to be aware of the financial responsibility entailed.

Inasmuch as you feel that at a later date you would be able to repay the money expended, it would seem to us at that this is an arrangement which you should work out jointly with Mr. Polonsky. If you have any further questions about this, you will find it more helpful to go to the Brooklyn Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, at 56 Court St. Brooklyn, NY.

- The following was written by A. Fonaroff regarding what transpired in her absence:  
“During my absence from the office Mr. D. Kazlowski of 486 Powell St. was seen by Miss Marianne Elatt. Mr. K. came in to the office to discuss the question of payment for transportation to the U.S. for his nephew, Josef, who is now in Italy.

Mr. K stated that because of his own lack of finances he had requested Mr. and Mrs. Polonsky of Ellenville NY to give their affidavit for his nephew with the understanding that he would not request anything further of them. He had not realized that the Polonsky’s would be contacted in regard to the payment of transportation costs. He explained that the Polonsky’s sent \$275 for Mr. Kazlowski to enable him to come to the U.S., but Mr. K would like to undertake this cost for his nephew on his own. However, Mr. K. states that the only available money he has at the present time is \$100. He thus requests that we refund the \$275 to the Polonsky’s, and he will deposit \$100 with us, and with then assume obligations for repaying the rest of the costs at a later date.

Mr. K. was told that this situation would be discussed with me and that he would be advised by me as to whether his request would be met.

Upon my return to this office, I discussed this with Miss Rabinowitz, supervisor. It is our thinking that the plan proposed by Mr. K. is not one in which we can participate. This plan was made independent of the agency and we are not asked to participate after a completed plan has taken effect. We feel that this is a matter which the relatives should work out amongst themselves, since according to our understanding of the affidavit, Mr. Polonsky has as much responsibility as the other relatives. I am therefore writing to Mr. Kazlowski about this.”

- The following was written by Mr. Frank Bishop on Jan 21, 1948  
“Josef Kazlowski, 21, arrived in NYC on 6/25/47 on an individual affidavit given by his cousin, Sol Polansky of Ellenville NY. Immediately after his arrival he proceeded to Ellenville where Sol Polonsky took him into his home (technical resettlement). **Josef worked in a hotel there for some weeks, but very soon he realized that in this small town, there were no sufficient educational facilities and no future for an ambitious boy like him. On agreement with his cousin, he left Ellenville for NYC on 10/2/48. Here he has been living with his uncle (father’s brother), David Kazlowski, 486 Powell St. He got himself a job as assistant to the counterman at a luncheonette. This job, which he is still holding, pays \$20 a week.**



Josef applied on the day of his arrival for help in finding employment and getting an education. **He expressed himself in fairly good English. First of all, he pointed out that he was not asking for money. The \$20 he was making was sufficient to meet his needs since he lived with his uncle. He was concerned with his future. He had left Ellenville because he could not get any real training there.** He would be interested in commercial designing, he believed, but he was not sure of himself in this respect. Maybe another field would be better. He needed guidance. Of course, the basis for everything was a sufficient command of English. Therefore he had enrolled in a night class in English at a high school in his neighborhood. However, the job was just a means to get a pay check and held no promise for improvement. We identified with Josef to the extent that a young man would, of course, wish to get a good training in a vocation he was interested in. We agree that NYC might offer better opportunities than Ellenville. But in order to authorize an agency services in NYC, we would need to determine first whether NYC could be authorized. We had some discussion of USNA's settlement policy. Josef brought out that he had a very close relationship to his uncle and his family. This might have to do with the fact that his entire family was killed by the Nazis except for one brother who lived in Russia, and was not permitted to emigrate. Josef was quick to add that we should not think of his not being in good terms with his relatives in Ellenville.

We arranged a second interview in which the uncle participated on 11/3/47. **David Kazlowski turned out to be a plain man, seemingly quite kind-hearted, who was happy to have a child of his late brother with him. He was prepared to assume full responsibility for Josef. He was financially able to do so. He was making good money as a power machine operator (note: sewing machine operator). The youngest of his 3 children attended college, the second one was working and lived at home, the eldest one was married.**

For some months to follow there was no contacts. On 1/6/48 Josef was again seen at his request. He is still attending night classes in English. We complimented him on his progress mastering the language. He smiled broadly, but added that he had decided not to lose any more time. He wished vocational guidance and possibly help in getting a job that would be in the field chosen by him for his future. Josef has a room in the house where the uncle lives and takes meals with the family. We shared with Josef that there were no objections against authorizing NYC, and discussed with him at length what he expects from a referral to the Vocational Adjustment Dept. He believes he might be given a vocational test, then go ahead learning the trade he is best suited for.

- An August 4, 1947 letter from Ann Petluck, Director of the US Migration Dept. was sent to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The letter states that young Josef Kazlowski, USNA # 01507, arrived in the U.S. in June of 1946, and that "Transportation costs of \$275 were deposited on his behalf by a relative, Mr. Saul Polonsky of .... Ellenville NY..... Recently, the relative (Polonsky) was in touch with us to advise that upon Mr. J. Kazlowski's arrival in the U.S., he stated that the money which was sent for transportation was due as a refund, and that Mr. Polonsky was advised before his cousin left Italy that this refund would be made..... We should like clarification about this since there seems to be some confusion existing here."



- A reply letter was dated Aug. 20, 1947, with reference to the 'War Orphan Minor', from Ms. Lois Horwitz of the Rome-Italy USNA office. The letter showed the 'account of our expenditures on Josef Koslowski's emigration from Italy to the U.S. The total was \$168, consisting of 'one ship ticket, 3<sup>rd</sup> class, Naples to NY' at \$158, consisting of \$60 maintenance (assume food + accommodations); \$28 luggage expense; \$80 embarkation tax) plus \$10 pocket money. "Kindly contact our NY Accounting Dept. as to refund of the unused portion of the deposit since only this (that) office is authorized to make the end accounts and to arrange reimbursements if warranted."

Note: \$275 then is worth \$3,200 in 2020 dollars.

- **It appears that ultimately, uncle Dave took full responsibility for nephew Joe's travel-emigration expenses, even though he could barely afford to do so.**
- In the photos of Joe K in Italy saying good-bye to his cousins before his departure to the U.S., Joe is wearing a suit that was sent to him by uncle Dave.....per his tailoring talents.
- The familial relationships may be confusing at first, with several people having similar names (Saul/Sol, Rose and Toby Rose, and so many Joe's). See the Cousin's Family Tree.  
Saul and Rae Polonsky had homes in Ellenville and NY. Saul and Rae had several children, with Joe Polonsky being their only son. Joe owned a successful restaurant in Ellenville called the County Line, and owned an airplane, and a boat, and possibly a trucking company. He also had a home in Lake George.
- A related family, by marriage, was the Resnick family, who founded the Channel Master company in Ellenville NY. This company was founded by brothers Joe, Harry, and Louis Resnick and did very well, with patents on new pre-fabricated and self-installable, quality TV antennas at the time that TV's were just coming into homes. The Resnick family later helped Leon get a job at the nearby Homowack hotel.
- Correction: Rae Polonsky was called Rachel Polanski in the 1<sup>st</sup> edition (likely her Jewish name).



Marcia and Joe say goodbye to Joe-the-Baker before he left Italy DP camp for America.  
Joe's suit was made by Uncle Dave in America, and mailed to Joe for his journey.



## Joseph Kazlow ('Joe-the-Baker')

### Contributed by Ira Kazlow & Arlene [K.] Feldman

My dad Joseph Kazlow, known as 'Joe the Baker' or 'Grandpa Joe', was very devoted to his family –no doubt because almost his entire immediate family was killed by the Nazis. Grandpa Joe always felt guilt for his survival while his family was killed, and lamented the fact that he did not take his young sister Rachel with him when he and his 2 other brothers escaped from the Lida (Lithuania) ghetto. The ghetto was being liquidated in stages during 1942–1943. Grandpa Joe and his brothers had fled into the woods outside of Ivye, and were in hiding for more than 18 months until he joined the Bielski partisans, with other family.

Grandpa Joe had a tremendous appreciation for family, even more than other survivors. Grandpa Joe was officially a cousin, but he was treated as a sibling by cousins Marcia, Ida and Joe and the rest of their family. At the same time, as a little boy I (Ira) always referred to Ida, Marcia, and Joe as aunts and uncles. Until the day that he died, I addressed my father's cousin as Uncle Joe, and my children knew him as Uncle Joe as well. My mom often told me how Ida and Marcia treated her as a sister. Ida and Marcia likely did not realize how hard it was for my mother to bridge the cultural gap, or how much their welcoming attitude helped my mom adjust to her new family and environment. I recall many times my mom would be on the phone with Marci or Ida for hours. Phyllis, Marcia, and Ida (with spouses) often vacationed together - in the Catskills, Europe, and Israel. To the Segal family's children, my dad was 'Uncle Joe', and my mom was 'Aunt Phyllis'. And I was their 'cousin Ira'.

Grandpa Joe had one brother who survived the war, Zelig. Joe's 2 other brothers, Eliyahu and Yehuda, were killed by the Nazis. When I was 11 years old, I remember going with my father to send 'care' packages of food, clothing, and more to Zelig, who lived in Ivye. On Mondays, when the bakery was closed, we went to a company in the East Village to have the 'care' packages shipped. At that time the Russian Iron Curtain was a barrier to visits and emigration. After the war the brothers wrote each other, but never saw each other again. Zelig died in 1970 from stomach cancer. Zelig had a wife named Ksenny, and a daughter Lucia. Zelig's brother Chatzkel had a daughter Esther. Ksenny and Lucia corresponded with my dad after Zelig passed away. I have copies of their letters still

Eliyahu was young when he was killed, and never married. Yehudah and his wife Rivka had 2 children Eli and Joseph. On my father's mother's side my dad had 2 first cousins– these were the children of my dad's mother's sister- Rachel Lebewohl and Abraham Gershovitz. Rachel lived in Israel and had 3 daughters Rivka, Sarah & Brachah. Abraham lived in the USSR and had 2 sons. Abraham visited us in the 1980's. He was a successful chemical engineer and was a member of the Communist party, often necessary for a career.

Of all the family, my dad had a great appreciation –*hakarat hatov* ('recognition of goodness') – for what 2 of his father's siblings, and their families, did for him. His Uncle Dave & Tante Jenny, and his Aunt Toby Rose [K.] and her husband Joseph Cohen, were instrumental in bringing their orphaned nephew to the states and helping him get settled. Dave's children, Bernie, Joey and Freddy were like brothers to Joe. Their family took my dad into their lives, and later into their small, crowded apartment in Brownsville, forming an instant bond. The documents from the HIAS show Grandpa Joe's travails in going from Europe to his life as a husband, father, great grandfather and successful man. The story of the documentation and work that Grandpa Joe's Uncle David K. and the Cohen and Polonsky family did are included in section 'Coming to America'.



Grandpa Joe's father, my grandfather Yitzhak, after who I am named, had 7 siblings, by way of his father Yosef Kozlowski. Uncle Dave was Yitzhak's brother, and Toby Rose K was Yitzhak's sister. Yitzhak's other siblings who survived the war were Chaim and Rose ('aunt Rose from Albany'). Yitzhak's sisters Chanah and Rifka did not survive the war.

Toby Rose (Taibele Rachel in Yiddish), was married to Joseph Cohen, who was in the US before Toby Rose. Toby Rose and Joseph had 5 children, Rae Cohen Polonsky, Saul Cohen, Sam Cohen, Bob Cohen and Eva Cohen. After arriving in the US, Grandpa Joe lived in Ellenville with the Cohen/Polonsky family. After a short time, my dad decided that job opportunities would be better in a larger city, and he moved into Uncle Dave's and Tante Jenny's small apartment. Tante Jennie, and their 3 sons took him in as another son and brother.

My dad never forgot what the Cohen/Polonsky family did for him. Each summer my dad and mom would take their 2-week summer vacation in the Catskill Mountains, and stay at one of their favorite hotels, such as Homowack, Tamarack, or Granit. My dad would load up the car with baked goods, and on the way to the hotel we would stop in Ellenville and deliver the goodies to this little old lady (Tante Toby Rose). I never understood why after a 3 hour drive we always had to stop there first and see her before I could jump into the pool at the hotel. But as I got older I understood that my dad never forgot *Hakarat hatov*, and tried to show his extreme appreciation for Rae's kindness. To this day, whenever I go up to the mountains, I find a way to pass by her house on Burlison Street and reminisce.

It was through the Polonsky's and Tante Toby Rose, that my parents met at the Orchard House on Burme Road in Ellenville. The Orchard House was a very small hotel owned by Tante Toby Rose and husband Joseph Cohen. Initially, my dad worked there in the summer as a waiter. By coincidence, Sol Cohen married my mother Phyllis' aunt, Ruth Barshak. My mom would go up to the Orchard House with friends for a week or 2 each summer, and that is where Joe met Phyllis. My mom described my father as gorgeous – he could have passed for a model, with his full head of black wavy hair and chiseled features. Grandpa Joe knew very little English, and Grandma Phyllis knew very little Yiddish, but the rest is history.

Before I got married my mom told me how hard it was for my dad on his wedding day because of the memories of relatives who died in the war. But Uncle Dave and Tante Jenny helped fill the void. My dad's uncle Chaim and tante Chanah Leah walked him down the aisle.

My mom, Grandma Phyllis, was born in 1931 in the Bronx. By chance, her mom Cecelia had also worked in bakeries all of her life. My mom was born during the Depression and did not have an easy life growing up. Mom's brother Bernie was in the air force during World War II, stationed in AL and TX. Bernie was honorably discharged after the war and attended NYU. My mom was a graduate of James Monroe HS in the Bronx. My mom was very family oriented as well, and had a large family due to the fact that Grandma Cecelia had 5 siblings. It was not easy for my mom, who was a real Bronx Yankee, to step into the family of a war survivor's traumatic world and East European culture. But to her deserved credit, she did it. Along the way, she also picked up a lot of Yiddish.

In the US, my dad had wanted to be a plumber, but could not get into the union because the GI's coming home after the war were taking these jobs. So he had many jobs, in one year more than 12! He then started to work in bakeries as a porter, learned all he could, and eventually got a baker's job at the famous Ebinger's bakery. Soon, the '2 cousins Joe' decided to become owners rather than employees, and in 1956 they bought the Glen Oaks Bakery. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> and smallest bakery within 7 blocks, but soon became the most crowded.



The quality of their baked goods and the welcoming staff and owners, resulted in success. The delicious *challah's*, *bobkas*, *mandelbread*, chocolate black-out cakes, and danish were the best. Before holidays, people stood outside and lined up around the corner to get in. Uncle Joe Kazlow stayed until 1967 when he went into the supermarket business with Dinah's brothers. My parents sold the bakery in 1986, one year after Arlene got married, but my dad continued to work as an employee baker for many years afterwards. He later worked in another bakery several miles from the Glen Oaks Bakery, until 2005.

The bakery business was hard. My dad's day began at 4 am, and he worked 100-hour weeks. My mom worked hard, and she was essential in keeping all running. Besides being a mom and managing our home, she ran the sales part of the bakery – counting receipts, making deposits, preparing 4 cash register drawers each night, and working behind the counter over 4 days a week. However successful the bakery was—and it was known across the country- it would not have happened without Grandma Phyllis.

In its prime the bakery supplied more than 15 *schuls* and Jewish institutions, and for *Rosh Hashanah* produced 3,000 *challahs*. My children recall with fondness the goodies that Grandpa Joe would bring for them each *Shabbos* and the birthday cakes he would bake and personally inscribe and decorate for them – we still have the pictures to prove it.

The bakery and the lessons I learned from it through my parents have guided me and made me a better person, and better lawyer. The skills that I acquired were not taught to me in law school. I am told by many customers how proud my mom and dad were of me and Arlene becoming lawyers.

My dad had various nicknames. To our family he was known as *Yussel*; to customers he was known as 'Joe-the-Baker'; to me he was 'the Boss'. To him I was the Manager or *zuni*, and when Arlene and Art blessed our folks with grandchildren, he became Grandpa Joe. Grandpa Joe loved children – hundreds of them worked in the bakery over 30 years, and they would often come to him and to Grandma Phyllis for advice and to discuss their personal problems. Grandpa Joe had a good sense of humor and created many memorable phrases and expressions. His *hakarot hatov* to Uncle Dave and Tante Jenny was bestowed through Bernie and Bernice to Andrea and Debbie and to their children Richard and David.

The Ivye *shtetl* never left my dad. He was simple in what he ate and the clothes he wore—which drove my mom crazy. He was also very generous, and had a heart of gold. How many times would he send goodies to family, or to customer's children who were away at school—he would say the price was "NC – no charge – let's give the Jewish piano (the cash register) a rest." Leon recalls that Joe offered to help Leon with money for a home, multiple times.

Grandpa Joe and Grandma Phyllis got tremendous *nachas* from Arlene's children Abby, Michael and Emily, and Grandpa Joe from 2 great-grandchildren, Menashe and Elli-Phyllis. And from my and Linda's 3 children David, Miriam, and Jonathan.

### **Arlene reminisces:**

Our children are named after their family members: Son Michael Judah, Moshe Yehuda is named after my mom's father and my father's brother. Youngest daughter Emily is named after my father's brother Zelig -Leah Zahava. Zehava means 'gold' in Hebrew.

Till this day I am in close contact with Geula, my pen-pal from Israel who became like a sister. We speak at least once, sometimes twice a week. Geula tries to visit dad's cousin Miram's grave almost every year on her *Yahrzeit*. Geula tells me this when we speak. Geula has stayed



in my house in the states many times with husband, Dr. Joav Merrick. Without Miriam I would have never met Geula, and would have missed that in my life.

My love of Israel and the Hebrew language have become so much stronger because of my father, who had such a strong bond with Israel. My times with Miriam and my friendship with Geula were also of great value. Wrote to Geula only in Hebrew from the beginning of our friendship and throughout her army service. When I visited Israel in 1976 I was even allowed to stay on her army base in the south. It was an unforgettable experience.

Art and I last saw Geula and Joav in person in July 2018 at the Acadia Hotel in Herziliyah Israel to celebrate our 34<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Ironically in July of 1972 I met Geula for the first time in the Acadia Hotel so our friendship has come full circle.



Gloria, Joe, Chaim , Aunt Rose, Joe,  
Uncle Dave & Tante Jennie



Vacation in Rome.  
Ida, Marcia, Joe, Phyllis



March 1967. Ira Bar Mitzvah



Ira law school grad. 1979



**'Aunt Rose from Albany' & Family    Rose (Kazlowski / Katz) Cohen**

**Contributed by**

**Rose's grand-daughter Carol Brand, & Carol's daughter Alicia Brand (Rose's great-granddaughter)**

It's likely that Rose Kazlowski was the 2<sup>nd</sup>, or at most 3<sup>rd</sup>, of Yosef Kazlowski's 8 children to leave Europe for the U.S., as when she asked her father Yosef for permission to leave Ivye, he asked 'Where will you stay?' Rose replied that as her brother David was already in NY, he would help her. So Rose, likely under 18 years old, headed off to the promised land of America, in about 1910. Rose bought a boat ticket from her savings, and was overjoyed with the exciting adventure ahead, not afraid of travelling alone, and not speaking a word of English.

Rose's belongings consisted of a coat and a suitcase. Rose did not mind being in steerage, at the bottom of the boat, in crowded and stifling conditions. She actually liked being next to the ship's engines, where it was warmer from the engine heat. She thought the food they provided was just fine. She never got seasick, as other passengers did. She admired the nice silverware used at mealtime. She thought the once-a-day outing to the deck for fresh air was quite benevolent. Rose enjoyed the voyage, looking forward to a new life.

Upon arrival in the NY harbor, Rose was processed at Ellis Island, the first stop for steerage passengers. In the course of completing forms at Ellis Island, Rose's surname name changed to Katz (we believe). Maybe she shortened it intentionally, or maybe an immigration agent decided to shorten **Katzlowsky** to Katz, to avoid a long name. Or maybe it was a simple typo.

Doctors examined all arrivals for illness, disease, eyesight (with Hebrew eye charts), and criminal background. Until the inspection, Rose was kept in a cage-like room, along with other steerage passengers. First or second class passengers did not undergo the same inspections that steerage passengers did, on the assumption that more wealthy passengers were likely to be healthier. Inspections took 5 hours, -a small inconvenience for freedom. Spunky Rose did not complain, knowing that she was healthy, and got past immigration just fine.

Her brother 'Uncle Dave' picked up his teenage niece Rose from the dock, and found a room for her as a boarder in a private home or boarding house. Uncle Dave was working as a tailor and sewing machine operator in the garment industry, and he was able to get Rose a decent job 'in the trade' as a seamstress. Jennie later asked what products Rose had made on that job. Rose said "I was a clock maker." Jennie said I don't understand, "You make clocks? What kind of clocks?" Rose said-"Yes, I make clocks that people wear". She was a cloak maker.

On March 11, 1911, the infamous Triangle Waistcoat Factory fire tragedy took place, killing 123 women and 23 men. (Women's blouses were called 'waistcoats'.) Rose tearfully told her uncle Dave that she lost many newly made girlfriends in that fire.

Many people left Europe in that period for a better life in the *Die Goldene Medinah*, the Golden Land. But Rose had another reason for leaving. In Ivye, a young man by the name of Alec Cohen had been trying to court Rose, and he was very persistent. He told Rose he wanted to marry her, calling on her constantly. Rose always told him to go away, to leave her alone. Rose had the idea that she could do better, and was planning on a new life in America anyway. She did not tell her parents that this was a large part of her reason for leaving.



Rose loved to tell this story of her marriage proposal from Alec, and how she got to Albany. (So much so that several people repeat this story to this day.)

**One day, there was a knock on the door of Rose's room.**

**Here is the dialog took place, in Yiddish:**

- **Rose: Who is there please?**
- **Alec: It's me, Alec.**
- **Rose: Alec who?**
- **Alec: Alec, Alec Cohen, from the old country.**
- **Rose opened the door-**
- **Rose: What are you doing here? How did you find me?**
- **Alec: I did not know you were going away. When I found out you left I asked your father "Where did my Rose go?"**  
**He gave me your address, so he must not dislike me.**
- **Rose: Go away, I don't want to have anything to do with you. That is why I left home.**  
**I wanted to get away from you. I didn't tell my father to give you my address.**  
**Go away**
- **Alec: But Rose, I came all this way for you. I missed you, and I am in love with you.**  
**I want to be with you always. I want to marry you.**
- **Rose: I have not missed you. I did not ask you to come. You make me sick.**  
***Ir zent a veytik in di tokhes* (translation: You're a pain in the ass)**
- **Alec: But I love you.**  
**If you marry me I promise I'll never be a *veytik in di tokhes* to you.**  
**I won't make you sick.**  
**I promise to take good care of you. I want you to be my wife.**
- **Rose thought for a moment: If we got married, where would we live?**
- **Alec: I have relatives in Albany, it's not that far. We could live there.**  
**Please say you will marry me. We will be very happy. I promise.**
- **Rose thought for less than a very few minutes.**
- **Rose: You know what? All right. I will marry you.**

Rose and Alec moved into a house on Cherry Street in Albany, in a not-so-great neighborhood. Rose continued to be observant, with a Kosher home. Her home welcomed many relatives who came to visit. Alec became a rag-man, selling material and utensils from a horse-drawn cart. When Rose had her first child, Morris, Alec had to make a better living. He sold his horse and wagon and went into the meat-butcher business. Later he joined his son Morris's meat business, that Morris's wife Yvette managed after Morris's untimely death.

**Contributed by Alicia, Rose's great granddaughter:**

After my Mom Carol (Cohen) Brand stopped hearing from cousin Marcia Albert several years ago, we thought that we had lost contact with that part of the family. For many years, a few times a year, Marcia & my Mom would cry with each other on the phone for over an hour, discussing life and family problems. We all remember Marcia's caring nature.

My great-grandmother, Bubu Rose (Cohen), was my mom's (Carol Brand's) grandmother. Bubu's son Morris married Yvette Alexander Cohen (later Dreisenstock), who became very close to her mother-in-law Rose. Mom's cousin Marcia Albert was also very close with these ladies, and they would all converse in Yiddish, along with Yvette's sister, my Aunt Millie. My mom Carol



was able to speak a little Yiddish, but not much. As a child, I only learned to get a gist of what was going on. These were wonderful caring women, whom I loved deeply. I was 12 years old when Grandma Yvette passed away, and I have still not gotten over her death. I remember the story Rose told of Alec's marriage proposal in NY -- Rose loved to tell it.

Rose and Alec had 2 sons, Morris & Joseph Leib. Morris married Yvette Alexander, my grandma by marriage. They were very much in love. In 1944, when they were both 26, Morris had to have a simple medical procedure (an appendectomy or gall-bladder problem). During the surgery, the surgeon nicked his liver, and Morris got an infection. It was during WWII and penicillin was new and in short supply, so all penicillin was going to the war effort. Morris died of the infection. The entire family was devastated.

Morris and Yvette had 2 young children when Morris died. Saul was 5 and my mom Carol was 1. About 3 years later, Yvette married William Dreisenstock. Bill was 14 years older than Yvette, and he had 2 daughters from a previous marriage. His daughter Eileen was already married to Philip Cohen (yes, another Cohen). Bill's other daughter Joyce was about 10 years old, and she would alternate living between Yvette & Bill's house & Bill's first wife's house. Later, Joyce had an early marriage, & a quick divorce. When she was a bit older Joyce met Sol Rhubin. Joyce told Sol that she was 5 years older than she actually was, and Sol told Joyce that he was 5 years younger than he actually was. It turns out that they were something like 30 years apart! They had a daughter they named Leslie. Leslie grew up to marry Bob Wilder & they have a daughter named Samantha, who is now a senior in high school.

Bill's other daughter, Eileen & her husband Phil had 3 children. They are Bobby, Marilyn & Susie. They all have children & grandchildren, as well.

Saul (the son of Yvette and Morris Cohen) had a short 1<sup>st</sup> marriage which produced 2 daughters, Stacy & Jennifer. The divorce was a not pleasant. Saul was an excellent father. The girls visited him for many years, through college. By that time, Saul had remarried. His 2<sup>nd</sup> wife was a wonderful Catholic woman from Poland, who had been born in a DP camp during the war. She came to the USA with her parents, & settled in a Polish community not far from where Saul lived. Her name was Eugenia (Jean) Kielbecki.. Saul & Jean have a son Michael. He is 35, and lives with Saul. Jean passed away from dementia in February 2020.

Morris had a meat store in downtown Albany, and after his early death his wife Yvette Alexander Cohen (later Dreisenstock) became a butcher and owner. It was very hard work for a young widow with 2 very young children. She had to hire people to watch her children after school. While not unusual now, this was not common then.

Alec Cohen's remaining son, Joseph, worked with Yvette in the meat market. Unfortunately, this arrangement did not work out, and people did not get along. Joseph moved away from the family. It broke Yvette's heart to have to tell Rose.

Yvette developed diabetes as an adult, which took its toll on her health. Yvette was often in hospitals when I was a child. She had to have part of a digit removed due to poor circulation. During the summer of 1985, she seemed to be doing well, and had a good report from her doctor. She had come to visit us for a short time. Two weeks later, her sister Millie called her, like she did every day, and there was no answer. After a few hours of worrying, Millie and her husband drove to Yvette's apartment. Yvette had suffered a massive heart attack that morning as she was getting dressed. She probably didn't even feel it. She died on July 3, 1985, ten years after her husband Bill.



I still sadly recall Bubu Rose's death, when I was eight. My Mom Carol and I were to go to Albany, as Bubu had gotten sick and she was in the hospital. We didn't really know how old she was, but she was at least in her 80's, probably in her 90's. My Gram & Mom knew that it was time to say goodbye. My Mom did not take me on that final visit, and she went to Albany by herself. After Mom came back home, we got word that Bubu passed away.

That was my first funeral. I can remember cousin Marcia Albert being absolutely devastated at the graveside. Before Marcia had children, she was able to visit Albany often, and was close to the Albany family. I truly thought that she might have leapt into the grave with Bubu. There was no comforting Marcia. They had shared so much with each other.

My brother Alex was born in 1970, and is named after Rose's beloved Alec. Alex married Jessica Backer in 1998. He graduated from Albany Medical College, and is a pediatrician near Albany. Jessica graduated from Albany Law School, across the street from the medical school. They have 2 daughters: Madalyn is a 16 year old junior in high school, and Isabelle (Izze) is a 15 year old sophomore.

I was born in 1973, and graduated from Fitchburg State College, in MA. I've worked as a news videographer & editor for the ABC station in Manchester, NH & the NBC station in Boston. I now work as a pharmacy technician, testing airline employees for COVID-19.

My mom, Carol Brand married my dad, Harvey Brand, in 1965. They celebrated their 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August 2020. My mom Carol and Harvey kept a 'bucket list' of experiences they meant to have in life. For a long time, my mom only had one item on that list. In March 2015, for my parents' 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, they visited Israel for the first time. Carol and Harvey hired a personal tour guide, and completed their bucket list. They now reside in Massachusetts, and go to Florida for winters.



Rose with Jean Kielbicki & Saul Cohen at their wedding. 1980



2006. Alex at Alicia's Bat Mitzvah





Rose Katz [Kazlowski]  
'from Albany'. In Europe



**No wonder Alec chased Rose  
to America**



Alec "Pop" Cohen with  
daughter-in-law Yvette



Rose with grandchildren  
Saul & Carol Cohen. 1946



1945. Rose & Carol [Cohen]  
Brand



Rose & Alec & grandson Saul



Bernie Carson with  
his Aunt Rose





Harvey Brand (Carol's husband), Jessica [Backer] Brand, Carol, son Alex, daughters Madalyn & Izze (Isabel) Brand



Yvette & Morris Cohen. 1943



Carol Cohen. 1947



Rose with great grandchildren Alex & Jenny



Carol & Yvette. 1983



1982, Thanksgiving. Yvette Cohen (right) & granddaughters Alicia, Stacy, Jenny



Rose's grandson Saul Cohen. 1947



Rose, daughter-in-law Yvette & baby Alex Brand. 1971



Alec Cohen & grand-daughter Carol





Bernie & Bernice Carson and daughters Andrea & Deborah visit Carol. 2005



Carol, Madalyn and Alex. 2005



Alicia, Carol, Harvey, Alex, Jessica [Backer] Brand, Izze, Madalyn. 2005



Alicia, brother Alex with Jessica, baby Madalyn. 2005



Alex, Yvette, Alicia



2006. Aunt Millie (Yvettes' sister) & Alicia



Jean Kielbecki & Saul Cohen  
Rose's grandson



Leslie Ruhbin & Bob Wilder



Newlyweds 1998  
Alex & Jenny [Backer] Brand



## **Toby Rose [Kazlowski] Cohen**

**Contributed by Irene Faith [Polonsky] Resnick – Grand-daughter of Toby Rose (K.) Cohen**

For more on the Polonsky family see 'J. Kazlow- Coming to America' section

My mom Rae [Cohen] Polonsky was one of 5 children of Toby Rose [Kazlowski] Cohen, my grandmother. Toby Rose was one of Yosef Kazlowski's daughters who came to the US at a young age, as did her sister Rose 'from Albany', and their brother David. David came to the US at about the same time as Toby Rose. We are not sure of the order of their departures from Ivye, but 'Aunt Rose from Albany' arrived after her brother David. We know that now because her plan was to stay with David. Toby Rose had married Joseph Cohen in Ivye, and they had 3 children before Joseph came to the US, alone. He earned some money, then brought his wife and their 3 young children to America. They then had 2 more children born in the US. Joseph was sickly, and died young. He may have harmed his health in an effort to avoid the Russian draft. But while my mom Rae was born in Europe, she did not admit to that fact. I did know that my grandmother's mom died when she was young and her father (Yosef K.) remarried and had more children. I often wondered about those cousins, even as a little girl.

Rae married Saul Polonsky, and so was part of that Ellenville family which became well-known within the rest of the Kazlowski family. Rae had 3 children: Me – Irene, the youngest; Janet; and Joe, the oldest. Joe was born 1931 and died in 2013. Joe had 3 children, Rhona, Tod, Sara. I married Arnold Resnick in August 1962. The Resnick family had invented the superb Channel Master TV antenna at the time when TV's were becoming popular. Our children are Jonathan and Joanie (deceased). Joanie's son is Benjamin. Jonathan's children are Adam and Aimee. I spend my spare time with my 2 dogs, and continue to paint. I am self-taught, and my specialty is portraying ordinary people doing ordinary things – which can be very exciting. I have traveled all over the world to do painting -to China, Kenya, Mongolia. I take photos, then do the paintings after I get home. I miss Joanie and Joe immensely.

I did a lot of work looking into family history for this 'project'. Even when young, I always knew that I had relatives living in Europe that no one talked about. It was very emotional taking a trip back in time. I've always been interested in the family, especially family that survived the Holocaust, and cousins I did not know. My interest always stayed with me. Joe-the-Baker was so incredibly nice to me. I was a little girl when he and other relatives came to the US. I remember them coming to our house frequently. There were also other survivors at my grandma's hotel, the Orchard House in Ellenville. Nobody talked about the Holocaust, especially when I was around, as I was young girl. But I knew what was going on. I knew relatives and their families were being killed – my relatives. I saw images of 'the camps' on newsreels shown before movie shows. That is how I learned about it, not from my family. It made me very scared. I couldn't talk to my mom about it because it was a taboo subject for her. My mom never talked about this, nor about her mom's early life in "the old country". My family was afraid to face possible questions as to what is happening to our family, or why they were being killed.

My mom Rae never admitted that she was born in Europe. She told everyone that she was born in Waterbury Connecticut, and that the building with her birth certificate burned down. She carried the fear of being found out about her origins for much of her life, because she never became a naturalized citizen. We only found out her birthplace when my brother Joe was in the Navy and we saw his documents. Grandma Toby Rose was an uneducated person and maybe thought that it was better to not have her children admit their foreign heritage. Maybe she



feared that the US government would send them back to Russia. Imagine living with that terrible fear. Mom eventually became a citizen when she married my dad, who was born in the US.

Toby Rose was a strong-willed person. Toby Rose made my mom drop out of school when she was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My mom was also strong-willed, and we didn't agree or get along with each other at times. I felt that she was hard on me—maybe that's a family tradition? She kept herself incredibly, unbelievably, and obsessively busy. When I think back on all the things she did at the same time, constantly, it boggles my mind. Her incredible non-stop cooking, Kosher, of course. Her baking was so good people suggested she open a bake shop. She sewed furniture covers like a professional, and even brocaded drapes and bedspreads. When she wasn't busy with those things she did gardening, like a pro. If she had any spare time, she loved to read.

I now understand why she kept so busy and occupied. I believe that because of her heritage and past, and the knowledge of what was happening to our relatives, and, coming to this country when she was 5 years old, she was probably traumatized, whether she realized it or not. G-D know what else happened in her poor life in Ivye—hunger, constant chores, a hard life, an absent father? (Grandpa Joseph was already in the U.S.) I heard stories that Grandma Toby Rose would leave my mom and the other children at 2:00 a.m. to walk, how many miles or hours?', to 'the cossacks barracks', where she would cook for them so she could bring back leftovers for her family. My mom used her obsessive busyness to avoid thinking about all of the issues in her past. Now having an understanding of my mom's traumatic reality of her youth, I am able to forgive her for what I considered, in my youth, perplexing behavior towards me.

My Uncle Bob Cohen had an interesting story. He was Grandma Toby Rose's youngest son, and fought in the Pacific in WWII. He developed Shell-Shock (now called PTSD). He came home in terrible shape and spent months in VA hospitals. When he finally came home they had a surprise party for him, but when he saw everyone he ran to the basement crying. It was very sad. He was married to Norma and they had 3 children: son Bruce, a daughter that died of breast cancer at age 29, and the youngest child Diane. Bob owned the Town Tavern, but he was volatile. He divorced Norma and left her and the children, and ended up in Brownsville TX, where he died. Grandma Toby Rose was heartbroken.

Toby Rose's son, Uncle Sol, was also in the war based in a paradise island. He did not see any action. He later bought the Town Tavern from Uncle Bob. Grandma's son Sam lived in NYC. He worked as a plumber, and had 2 children: cousin Stewart and cousin Honey (probably not her real name). All did very well. Aunt Eva died in a tragic accident.

When young cousin Gloria died in that awful accident my grandma sat on the back porch crying. Grandma Toby Rose was so tough, so I could not understand why she was crying non-stop. Nobody talked to me about it, as usual, but I listened. Gloria was such a beautiful girl. How could this happen? She survived the Holocaust and then got killed by a drunk driver.

Our family now lives in other states, and because of the Covid pandemic we haven't gotten together. I am in Lone Tree CO, 20 miles from Denver. I miss my deceased daughter Joanie, and not being able to see her son Ben, who lives in Georgia. Joanie's husband Peter is a Professor of Economics at Oglethorpe University. He's wonderful to me and calls every week. It has been hard since my daughter died.

I could go on and on. It is almost therapy, and I can tell so many stories. I look at my son and my grandchildren. They have no idea. They don't carry or show the fears that I had growing up, but they too are survivors, they just don't realize it. My son came over to see the research I did about where his roots are. It has been an emotional roller coaster. I am so glad that I did it.





Toby Rose Cohen (*Taibele Rachel*) in front of the Orchard House Hotel Ellenville NY



Toby Rose 's husband Joseph Cohen



Rae's daughter Janet ~ 9 yrs. At Orchard House .



Irene & Jonathan with children Aimee now 16, Adam now 23. Aimee is a junior in HS. Adam is doing a Fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, specializing in Artificial Intelligence.



Sarah Beth Cohen at Orchard House Burme Rd, Ellenville.

The Orchard House was heated, so could be lived in year-round. It had 2 dining rooms, children & adults; a wrap-around porch, guest rooms upstairs, and a tiny office. The Catskill Institute lists Cohen's Orchard House as a hotel.



1965. Rae Polonsky, Grandma Toby Rose, & Sol Cohen's wife aunt Ruthy

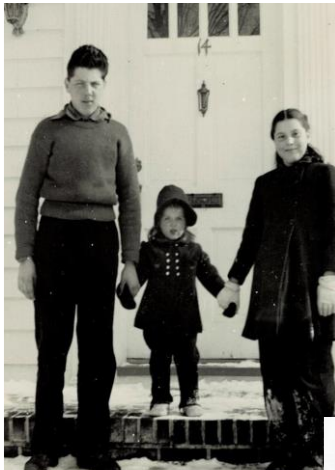


Toby Rose Cohen at Irene Polonsky Resnick wedding



Toby Rose, Irene, sister Janet hiding behind Irene, Grandma Polonsky





Rae Polonsky's children  
Joe, Irene, Janet

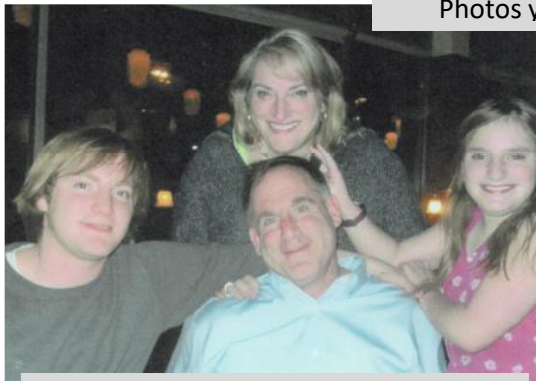


Saul & Rae Polonsky. Irene's parents.  
Rae was Toby Rose's daughter



Joe Polonsky Bar Mitzvah 2.18.1944  
Janet 9; Joe 13; Irene 1 ½

Photos years 2014–2017



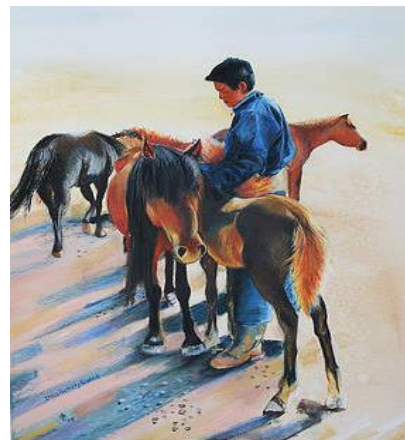
Jonathan Resnick (Irene's son) with son  
Adam, wife Susie, daughter Aimee



Irene's son Jon & wife Joanie Kower



Back: Peter Kower, Adam Resnick  
Front: Ben Kower, Aimee Resnick, Irene Polonsky  
Resnick, Jonathan Resnick, Janie Kower Resnick



Irene' Resnick painting.  
'Mongolian Nomad'



### **Miriam Kazlowski Galinkin**

#### **Contributed by Arlene [K.] Feldman, Ira K., Deborah Carson, Philip K., Gloria [K.] Stulberger**

Miriam (K.) Galinkin was the only daughter of Leib Kozlowski, one of Yosef Kozlowski's 8 children. So, Miriam was first cousin to the children of Uncle Dave, Joe-the-Baker, and Ida Segal, among others. Miriam [K.] married Eliyahu Galinkin in 1939, who had been a school principal near Iyve, where Miriam taught.

Ira K. always visited Miriam when in Israel. Ira's daughter Miriam is named after her.

#### **Contributed by Arlene [K.] Feldman**

I stayed at Miriam's apartment in the summers of 1976 and 1979. In fact I slept on her *mirpesset* (outdoor porch) in 1976 because it was so hot, as there was no air conditioning. Miriam's apartment at 10 HaGalil Street was on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, and she thought I was out of my mind, as she did not think it was safe so high up. What did I know? I had just graduated from high school, and did not think of safety over comfort. When I lived with Miriam in 1979 she gave me her bedroom to sleep in because it had air conditioning. She was always worried about me. I used her apartment as a base. I volunteered to work on a kibbutz in *Emek Beit Shan*. It was just before the fall of the Shah of Iran and the *Yom Kippur* war.

Miriam was a teacher, and had a friendly student name Geula. Through Miriam, Geula and I became pen-pals when I was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and Geula was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. I learned how to drink tea have cottage cheese and Israeli salad in Miriam's home. She was wonderful and caring and I always felt at home. I remember her apartment was in a convenient location, right across the main bus station) in Herzliya. She was just a wonderful person.

Miriam had brothers Chatzkel and Shlomo, and Chaim (all Leib's children). Chatzkel's had several wives. The one that he was with the most was Tzivya and Tzivya had a daughter who was raised by Tzivya and Chatzkel who lives on the same Kibbutz Revivim that Golda Meir retired to. Shlomo was killed before he was able to marry.

#### **Contributed by Philip Kazlow:**

Miriam married Elihayu Yosef in Europe. Elihayu was taken into the Russian army and was killed in the war. She eventually made Aliyah, and in her devotion to her husband decided never to remarry. She taught school, and was beloved by her students to whom she was totally dedicated. She visited us in the early 1960's. I was 5 or 6 years old. I remember going to the pier to greet her and pick her up from the ship and bring her to Ida and Rubin. She was totally dedicated to her husband's family as well. I remember meeting her father-in-law on a trip to Israel. He was very learned and was the chief Rabbi of Worcester, MA. I always visited her on my trips to Israel, she was like a second mother. A picture of her husband was centered in the room. Miriam had a brother, Chatzkel-Yechezkel who may have gone unnoticed. He lived in *Kiryat Chaim* outside of Haifa. He had made Aliyah in the 1930's. He was married twice. The second wife who I remember was a kibbutznik from Beersheva.

#### **Contributed by Deborah Carson**

I spent a great deal of time with Miriam and with her brother Yehezkael. When I was in Israel from 1982 to 1989, I stayed with Miriam on many occasions, and for several *Shabbats*. She was wonderful. I brought my CNN producer boyfriend home to her, and she thought he was great! Miriam was an excellent teacher, and we spoke only Hebrew. I do not remember when I last saw her - perhaps 1987?



She also taught me home management, Herziliya-style- when to operate the *dud shemesh* (solar water heater), making vats of homemade soup, and being sure to let everything cool off before putting it in the refrigerator.

I hadn't thought about the Israeli Kazlofsky's for years. This brought back wonderful memories.

Following pictures courtesy of Prof. David Golinkin, the nephew of Miriam's husband. Now President, Schechter Institutes Inc.; President Emeritus, Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. 4 Avraham Granot St., Jerusalem



Miriam at work, in Israel. Note map on wall to left, Israel & Palestine

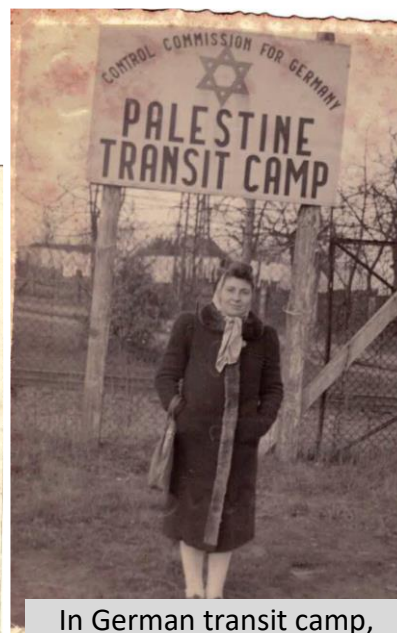
Young Miriam



Eliyahu (with moustache) & Miriam to right, at work in Europe. The picture on wall is Stalin



at Eliyahu grave



In German transit camp, on way to Palestine -Israel



## ISRAEL

### Rina Kalev Family. Eli, Liat & Peter Lerner, Avner

#### Contributed by Rina.

Rubin had 2 cousins who emigrated to Israel before the war. Israel Bloch (wife Miriam), and his sister Sara-Tova Bloch. Israel and Sara's father was Rubin's uncle Chanan, whose wife was Sarah. Both Chanan and Sarah perished in WWII along with the rest of his family who had remained in Europe.

Israel and Miriam lived in Hadera, where they had daughters Yafa (deceased) and Ilana. Israel and Miriam met with the family in the U.S. and in Israel.

Sara-Tovah married Avner Levin, and lived in Ramat Gan, where they had a daughter Rina. Their home was damaged by Iraqi SCUD rockets during the 1991 Gulf War. They rebuilt the house into a beautiful modernistic home. Rina and husband Eli Kalev now live in that house, where children Avner and Leyat grew up. Leyat married Peter Lerner, who is a former IDF officer and communications spokesman, who often appeared on American TV. Leyat has a beautiful daughter Noya, now 9 ½.



Liat & Avner



Peter & Liat Lerner



Noya Lerner



Rina & Leyat



Eli



## ISRAEL

### Yudovich Family (Ida Segal's first cousins – Chaya & Malka)

#### Contributed by Nurit and Moshe



Brothers Moshe & Mott Dolev



Malka B., Rubin, Ida, Marcia, Zehava Y



Chaya & Orly



Bezalel & Zehava



Moshe w/Elad's Lisa & Thomas



Marv, Roz, *mishpacha* in Chaya's home.

Building in back served as a mandatory bomb shelter years ago.  
Then it became a laundry room.  
On Ida & Rubin's first visit there were chickens roaming the yard,  
along with a dog that ate chicken bones.  
The home has fruit trees, flowers, potted plants that Chaya loves.



Shevuoth 2016,

When Patti & Leon first visited Israel,  
Orly and Zehava started talking English  
to us. Until then, they did not know that  
they each spoke English.





2015 birthday celebration at Angel's Forest



Noah & Chaya Wedding 1948,  
Kiryat Shmuel, near Haifa



Orly & Aharon at  
Mayan's wedding. 2016



Gilad's pre-wedding henna  
party. Chaya, Zehava & Bezalel



Malka & Joseph



Chaya, Joseph, Malka in Germany 1946



Baby Nurit, Chaya, Noah. Aharon, Bezalel  
1958 Kiryat Ono



Shevuoth outing



Moshe in Sinai peninsula



## Gloria Kozlowski High School Essay - 1950

### Aunt Gloria's High School Essay – 'I Am a Senior in High School, in an American High School'

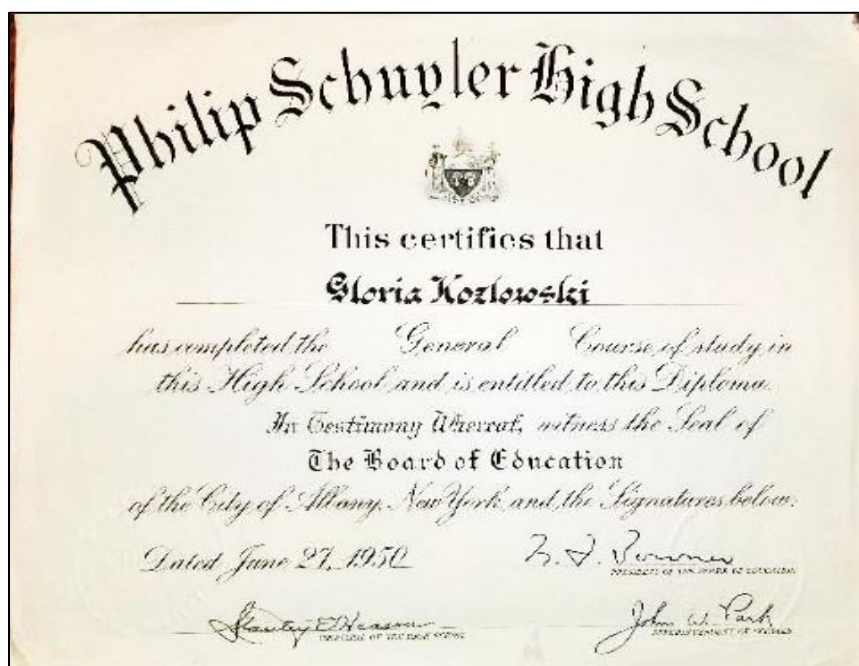
Linda found these pages in Aunt Marcia's belongings. Gloria [K.] was 18 years old when she graduated from Philip Schuyler High School in Albany NY, in 1950. From aunt Dinah's memory (in 2020), it's likely that Gloria transferred to the Albany HS from Brooklyn because of family circumstances: her mom Chanah Leah worked; her dad Chaim was ill, from continuing strokes; her brother Joseph was working and could not take care of her. Gloria's boyfriend (Walter) was also in Albany. Gloria likely lived with aunt Rose in Albany. Gloria was killed by a drunk driver in 1953, at the age of 21.

Dinah also remembers the exact words when her good friend Gloria recommended that Dinah go out on a date with a 'very nice boy' Gloria had in mind. Dinah asked "If he's so nice, why don't you go out with him?" Gloria laughed, and said "Because he's my brother". Dinah did go on a date with quiet, shy, young Joe Kazlowski....

At the end of the essay entitled **I am a senior in high school, in an American High School** Gloria reminisces about the difference between her good situation in the USA and what she faced in the ghetto a short while back.

This is an amazingly well written essay – Gloria had only been in the US for a few years.

if we were going to live a day more or will be killed today. We were no longer children, overnight we grew up. My childhood was a period of unhappy memories and haunting fears. ★  
Yes I look on these happy children in the playground on my way home from school and I am glad to see that here there is no fear and no hate and I ~~hope~~ am glad for these children and for all the other children to come.





**I am a senior in high school, in an American High School. By Gloria Kozlowski**

It is hard to believe. Four months ago it was only a distant dream, today I am here, a student at Schuyler High School, in a friendly city, in a land of freedom. I sometimes wonder if my classmates know how lucky they are, for they have always lived here and they must have had a wonderful childhood. A childhood with toys and games, friends and parties. Warm summers with vacations and snowy winters with sleds and ice skates. It must have been a wonderful childhood, one upon which they could look back on as the fond and happy days.

On my way home for lunch I pass Public School No. 1. I stop to watch a childhood that differed so much from my own. I watch the boys as they play basketball and baseball. I see them run, and throw the ball with their strong young arms and listen to their cheers when they catch the ball. I see happy little girls skipping rope to the tune of a song and pleasure shines from their blue eyes. I see the little boys exchanging comic books near the school and laughing and jumping. I see a little colored boy playing with a little white boy, their voices raised in friendly shouts. I look at all these children playing under a peaceful sky and I think to myself how wonderful it is that no one will rush them and take from them before time the wonderful and precious thing that we always look back on, our childhood years. Not all children, in all the countries of the world as so privileged. It was many years ago and yet it seems like only yesterday that I was like one of these children, happy and gay, with the same childish thoughts of playing and skipping and jumping and laughing, but it was before I entered school. The first day of school I will never forget. Weeks before I was to enter I prepared myself for that important day. Copybooks were bought, colored pencils and several sheets of white paper.

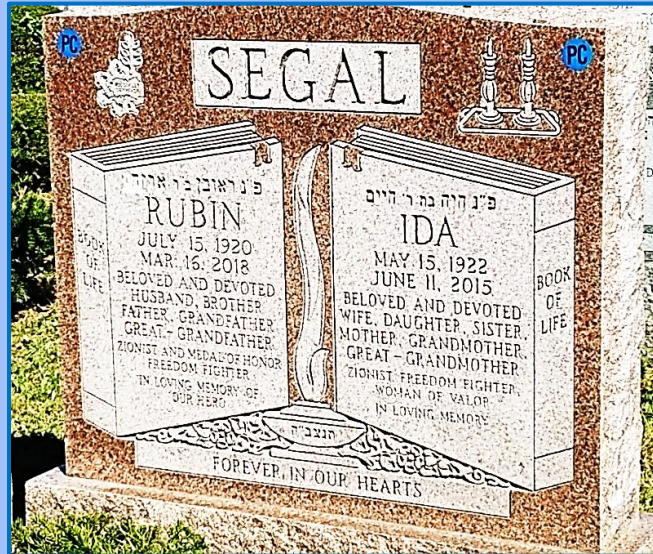
It was all I talked about for days. Nor will I forget the special white dress that mother bought me for school. Counting the days, the one I was waiting for came at last. It was a nice autumn day, the sun was still shining then and the green was still on the grass and trees and the flowers gave mood to everyone. On that day, my mother leading me by the hand took me to school. Proud of herself that she was leading me, her youngest child, to school. On the way I saw many other boys and girls close to their mothers and fathers also on the way to school. Everyone of us were excited for we were going to something new.

The classroom was big, the walls white, with a nice picture of the principal. The benches were painted black and every child looked with eagerness, thinking of where he or she was to sit. The teacher, a short Polish man, wore a clean white blouse and a navy blue suit. He looked kindly at us and in a gentle voice asked us to listen to him. In his welcome speech he explained to us what education was and our duties to it and to the school. Every child looked at him with a special interest, an interest that took us away from our toys and led us to a new world of books. The teacher who we never met before became so dear in our child's eyes and he grew dearer to us as the days went by. Those first school days were full of many new pleasures and new friends.

**Not too long could this peace continue for us children, for war broke out and we had to say goodbye to our school and the few years of childhood we passed in it. We entered overnight into a new period of life, a serious period in which there was no room for games or children's laughter. Many of the children were taken away from their homes, the wonderful sunshine was forbidden for them for they wore the Star-of-David. Surrounded by fences of wire we sat in the ghetto, without bread, just waiting for tomorrow, wondering if we were going to live a day more, or if we will be killed today. We were no longer children, overnight we grew up. My childhood was a period of unhappy memories and haunting fears.**

Yes, I look on these happy children in the playground on my way home from school and I am glad to see that here there is no fear and no hate and I am glad for these children and for all the other children to come.





Rubin & Ida --- Beth Israel cemetery, Elmont NY. Sec E Block Z.

**Near other relatives and Ivenetz – Ivye *lantzmen*.**

**Rubin's sister Sonia and husband Joe Starkman are interred to the left.**

Symbol on top left commemorates Holocaust Survivor.

### *Inscriptions*

#### **RUBIN**

Beloved and Devoted  
Husband, Brother,  
Father, Grandfather,  
Great-Grandfather  
Zionist and Medal-of-Honor  
Freedom Fighter  
In Loving Memory of Our Hero

#### **IDA**

Beloved and Devoted  
Wife, Daughter, Sister,  
Mother, Grandmother,  
Great-Grandmother  
Zionist, Freedom Fighter,  
Woman of Valor  
In Loving Memory

### **Forever In Our Hearts**

